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[THE HOLLOW TRUCE.]

## ELGIVA;

### OR, THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,  
And blown with restless violence about  
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts  
Imagine howling. It is too horrible.

The morning sun was struggling well nigh in vain to pour his bright beams into the dark recesses of a vaulted cave, whose light seemed to be derived rather from the artificial but soft and romantic radiance of artfully disposed torches than from the more natural, calm and cheering beams of Heaven's great luminary. It was indeed a singular and magic scene which those torches revealed to view.

Rich piles of carpets formed soft cushions for those who desired to repose on their tempting fulness, while low, carved oak tables, brilliant mirrors, and velvet hangings concealed the rugged walls of the natural apartment, a rude but picturesque erection, in the fashioning of which man's inadequate skill had not been needed.

There was but one tenant of the vast chamber at the moment when the sunbeams first penetrated its gloom.

A pale figure lay on the low couch, which was formed by the Oriental-like cushions, with closed eyes and extended limbs, that indicated profound repose of the senses as well as extreme languor of the bodily frame.

Perhaps the sunshine, faint as it was, roused the sufferer, for, with a slight start and a heavy sigh, he opened his eyes and looked about him with a bewildered gaze at the novel scene around. Then he raised himself with some difficulty—rather, perhaps, from the remaining stupor of his heavy sleep than actual inability to move—and sat up, half supported by the

cushions that had been placed carefully behind his head.

"Where am I?" he murmured. "Lena—Elgiva—have you indeed deserted me, or was it a blessed dream that made me think you were watching over me? It seems as if I had been dead, in another world, and have now returned to this hideous, hopeless confinement," he added, gazing impatiently round the cave, from which he could perceive no outlet in the partial obscurity that veiled the outer recesses of its arched vaults.

There was a sudden rustle near, which for a moment actually brought a cold thrill to his weak frame, then a slow step was heard approaching from behind the couch that once again warmed his blood with a vague hope that it was the light tread of the being he loved best on earth, or, if that were too wild a fancy, that his fair and loving sister-cousin was at hand to watch his slumber and guard him like an angel from harm and hurt.

But neither Elgiva's sparkling, dark beauty nor Lena's more subdued and refined countenance met his gaze as the visitor drew nigh to his couch. In its stead the harsh though well-marked features of his uncle, Harold Farina, came like a dark cloud to shadow his vision, and Juan instinctively shrank as if the shade of the upas tree had chilled his blood.

"It is you, then, is it, who has worked this wrong?" said the invalid, gathering strength, as it appeared, from the indignation the sight of his dreaded relative kindled in his bosom. "I might have imagined as much. From my—I may say our infancy upwards you have ever been the cold, harsh tyrant of our lives. It is but natural that every evil should come from your hands, that you should dash away the cup of happiness from my lips; but I demand at any rate the freedom that is my right. At least I will not be a prisoner. I will claim that justice or die in the attempt."

He started from his reclining position with a flushed face and blazing eyes that were perhaps more dangerous to himself than the object of his resentment.

Harold put his powerful hand on his arm and re-

placed him on his pillows with a half-contemptuous, half-peremptory air.

"Foolish lad, be quiet. Do you suppose you can resist a power that has ere now ruled kingdoms? Calm yourself. You are safer in this dark, deep cave than you were in the splendid castle that formed for you but a luxurious trap for your unwary ignorance."

"Then it was your agency—you snatched me from the only place that contains my life's happiness, my sole treasure," said the young man, sullenly.

"It was I who snatched you from the very jaws of death, from the mouth of a grim monster who was but alluring you by a glittering bait," said the gipsy, calmly. "Poor boy! I could find it in my heart to pity you, and you know the contempt such pity entails in a brave man's soul. Juan De Castro, if you have the spirit of your race, if one drop of their blood flows in your veins, cast off such unworthy, pining weakness. Be a man—not a child crying for the nurse who has coaxed his baby spirit."

"You are unjust, insulting," returned Juan, bitterly, "and if you mean me to display your savage selfishness, your cold unfeelingness of heart as my fitting heritage, I thank Heaven I am no kin of yours in spirit, whatever I may be in blood."

"Perhaps about as much one as the other," said Harold, significantly. "And, harkye, boy, I have not come to spend my time and breath in idle reproaches. What I am here for is to test your fitness for the destiny that may—mark me—may await you, then act according to the result."

"What destiny, save of a vagabond, a thief, and outcast can await one of your kindred?" said the youth, with assumed scorn, though the keen perception of the gipsy could detect the latent curiosity which was but smothered in his breast.

"That may depend on yourself, and whether you have preserved the fire of the blood which should have warmed your soul if you are indeed a man worthy of your birth and your possible fate," was the firm reply.

"Now listen. If you are willing to endure the ordeal, to take the test which your ancestors have gone through before you, if you will prove yourself brave and daring,

then a brilliant destiny, high duties, and gratified hopes may be yours. But, mind you, you will have no child's play, no woman's vacillation to encounter. You must take a solemn oath, such as would make your very blood curdle to risk perjuring yourself by breaking, which would have such a penalty attached to it as the bravest and the most hardened would tremble to endure as the consequence of its forfeit. Have you courage for this as the first step to your new career?"

"I have courage for aught but guilt and treachery," returned Juan, sternly. "But I would rather die than stain even the humble name I bear with disgrace or my conscience with remorse."

"Weak, foolish lad. You would start at your own shadow," sneered Harold. "But be content; no such duty is required of you. You will but follow the example of your forefathers and you will gain power such as kings can hardly wield, though you must prove yourself worthy of it by yielding up such obedience as only a brave spirit can display, and its reward," he continued, in a lower and more subdued tone, "your reward will be rank, wealth, and a lovely bride."

The young man started eagerly.

"Fie! I do not tempt me too sorely. I will not be trifled with even by you who have kept such a stern hold of my childhood and youth. Beware what you do, for it might risk your own life as well as mine if you dared to bring her name, her safety, her precious happiness into danger."

"Terrible words and sadly wasted," said the man, scornfully. "I tell you, boy, that the fair creature who shall be yours if you will trust to my guidance is as dear to me as to yourself, and I would sacrifice you a hundred times over for her sake. Now are you satisfied?"

"Yes, so far; only," resumed the youth, hesitatingly, "only I would know more than you choose to tell me as I pledge my word. Man, who am I? who do you intend me to become? Why am I to be treated as a child unworthy of the knowledge which is every man's right? Either I am fit to be trusted or I am unworthy of the destiny you pretend awaits me."

"Which you must prove that you deserve by being able to control yourself and your own impatience," said Harold, quickly. "It is womanish to indulge such curiosity until the right time comes for its gratification. I tell you, boy, I will pledge you my very life, if you choose, that I am not deceiving you, and that I will fulfill all my promises—ay, and with perseverance and honour if you trust to me and my guidance. But there is a web of mystery connected with the past which must not be unravelled so suddenly as you would wish. It must unfold itself slowly and naturally till the moment for full revelation arrives."

"When—when will that be? At least tell me how long I must wait for the knowledge," exclaimed the young man, whose eyes had been fixed with keen and penetrating sharpness on the gipsy's face as he spoke. "I cannot submit to be led on in darkness like a slave for I know not how long a time. If you will fix some limit to the suspense I might perhaps wait, but—"

"Then it shall be so," said Harold. "I will promise that you shall know all that is safe and necessary to tell so soon as you have taken the oath of which I spoke but now. If you will consent to that first step all else shall be rapid and easy of fulfilment."

"And it will ensure me her—my own beautiful love?" said the young man, clasping his hands.

"It shall give her to you as your bride ere you have been six months in possession of your new dignities," replied Harold, with a secret smile that Juan in his enthusiasm did not perceive. "Nay, what is more, the oath you will take binds you to such marriage within a certain time, on penalty of forfeiture of your new wealth."

The young man laughed.

"There needs little penalty to bind me to what I would give years of life to accomplish," he returned. "And she, my beloved, thank Heaven, is willing as myself, even had I no such temptation to offer. Yes, if that is all the danger I am safe indeed for happiness."

Again the inexplicable smile crossed Harold's lips. Perhaps it was at the young man's enthusiasm, which to his maturer spirit would have a touch of folly in it. In any case it passed away ere he spoke again, and his brow was stern and lowering when he addressed the invalid.

"It is well then. You consent, and there only remains to arrange all the preliminaries to the necessary ordeal."

"Why—what? I am ready. Let it be at once, and without loss of time," he interrupted, eagerly.

Harold laughed outright.

"No, no, not so, foolish lad. You little know what you are talking of, nor what you have to expect if you speak like that. You will need strength and

courage ere you can undergo the ordeal before you, and there will need others beside myself to complete the ceremonial. Listen, Juan. The oath I propose will make you a participator with the noblest and most powerful of the Continent of Europe, and will need their concert and co-operation ere you are admitted to the bond. But so soon as you have recovered health and strength and I can trust your bodily and mental firmness there shall be no farther delay."

"But where am I? Whither would you take me?" questioned the young man, sharply.

"You are in safety, and you will not have many miles to travel ere you reach the appointed place," was the reply. "All you have to do is to calm your mind and to gain strength and courage for the ordeal which is to place you in such distinguished company. Now I will leave you to your repose. See, here are wine and refreshments and restoratives also when you feel faint and languid from your recent suffering."

"But where is Lena? Why has she deserted me?" asked the young man.

Harold's brow darkened. "Lena is far away. It is not my pleasure that she should any longer hamper your manliness for her foolish woman's weakness," he replied. "Henceforth she can be nothing to you, save as a memory of the past, uninteresting and degrading. But why do you forget Amice?" he added, jealously; "surely she does not merit such neglect?"

"Amice needs nothing save the love and kindness she receives at your hands," was the evasive reply, "and in her brilliant beauty she can scarcely find a thought for one who has nothing to give in return."

"Perhaps—well, we shall see," returned Harold. "But all is idle and as a blank till the test is taken, the ordeal passed. Now once more farewell, lucky heir to rank and wealth."

Clasping his hand with the same close and almost painful grasp that Marian Oliver had given to the young Lena on their first interview, the gipsy withdrew as mysteriously and noiselessly as he had appeared.

Juan was alone in that strange solitude, and, in spite of his manhood, a chill ran through his veins at the helplessness of his position, and the dark, unknown future to which he was pledged in so solemn and irrevocable a manner.

The Rubicon was passed! What awaited him on its opposite shore?

Juan Farina would indeed have given himself up rather to death than the mysterious power to which he had yielded, if he could have foreseen the dark and miserable destiny to which he was condemning himself and those he loved best. But, happily perhaps for him, the vista was hidden in the impenetrable fog that hangs over the very nearest events of frail and fallible mortals' lives, however nice or foreseeing may be their mental vision.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

I'll love no more those cruel eyes of hers,  
Which, pleased or angered, still are mariners.  
For if she dart—like lightning—through the air  
Her beams of wrath, she kills me with despair;  
If she beholds me with a pleasing eye,  
I surfeit with excess of joy—and die.

"ELVIG, the Prince Charles wishes to bid you farewell ere he leaves the castle for a brief time," said the count, entering the apartment where his daughter was sitting with a book on her lap which she appeared to have forgotten to read.

Her eyes were wandering round the room with a vague, abstracted look that scarcely conveyed to her brain an impression of the objects on which they rested.

She was indeed changed since the day when she was gaily bounding through the woods and glades, and laughingly discussing with Mabel Harcourt the half-disbelieved mystery of her cousin's disappearance and her own proud heritage.

The dancing light in her dark eyes was calmed into a subdued brilliance, the rich bloom on her cheek was pale to a sadder and less glowing shade, and the very attitudes and movements that had once indicated the graceful but joyous vivacity of every thought and feeling were now quiet and measured as if years instead of weeks had matured their youthful buoyancy.

She inclined her head at her father's announcement with a cold dignity that perhaps rather arose from grief than actual submission to her fate.

"You will remain, papa. There can be nothing that the prince should have to say that you, or a whole world, need not hear were it necessary," she said, proudly.

"My child, he desires a private interview. I have promised it," said the count, with a look and tone that softened as he gazed on his daughter's changed expression.

"Remember, Elviga, he will not harass you again—if, indeed, it be a harass to receive your future husband, your father's chosen son-in-law. Still, if I dared refuse," he whispered, in an almost

inaudible tone, "if I dared, I would not grieve you, my child, especially when you are suffering and weak."

He stooped down and kissed her brow and cheeks with a tenderness that she had not of late experienced from him, and her heart softened and warmed at the affectionate caress and the adored tone.

"Let it be so then, papa. Only I cannot promise that he will not be displeased at the result of the interview," she said, more gently. "I have never deceived him or you, and, unless forced by some necessity that I cannot even imagine, I will never, so long as I have life, change in my resolve. When—where is he going, papa?" she exclaimed, suddenly, after a brief pause.

"To-morrow, Elviga, and I believe he is going to return to his own country for a short time. He had hoped and intended that you should accompany him; but I have persuaded him to defer the wedding for a few months, when all will be ready for a splendid reception to the princess-bride. Now, my child, why will you be so perverse in your opposition to so suitable and promising a match?" concluded the old man, with a plaintive earnestness that might well have touched a more flinty heart than the young heiress possessed.

"Because I do not love him, my father, and because he does not love me," was the girl's reply, in as firm a tone as the rising tears that were determinedly crushed beneath the white lids permitted.

"Father," she resumed, with clasped hands, and a flushed cheek that added sparkling brilliancy to her black eyes, under which the old man's well nigh quailed, "surely you are blinded by that bad, imperious, selfish man. If it was true, deep love that made him seek my hand, and if you had fixed your mind upon the union, or if your safety were involved, then I might strive to bend my will and conquer my heart. But as it is I cannot—I will not risk so loveless—hated a fate. Trust in Heaven, my father, trust in your daughter's love. You shall not be his victim. We will give up all—go far away—suffer anything rather than such perjury and misery. Now I am ready," she said. "Let him come. It will be sooner over, and then he can go—free us from his hateful presence. It is like the shadow of the spasm tree," she added, with an impatient shudder.

Count Arabeim silently withdrew. It was strange how he actually covered in submission to his child, as if guilt and the bondage of it changed their natural positions and he was bound to yield to her superior will.

Elviga gave one hasty glance around. The whole apartment was pervaded by an air of elegant luxury—of woman's trifles, of woman's employments, that amidst their refinement had a sort of softness and familiarity in their careless and graceful disorder.

"He shall not be admitted here as it is," she exclaimed, impatiently. "He shall feel that he is a stranger."

With her own fair hands, unused as they were to such employment, she swept away the graceful trifles, set, as it were, the whole *entourage* in order, and, arranging her refractory tresses in the most precise neatness, she placed herself in a high-backed, solitary chair, and awaited her unwelcome guest.

She had not long to remain in suspense. A few brief moments, and a firm, measured step was heard approaching. The door opened, and the prince entered, with a far different expression and air than he usually wore.

The cold, cynical look had given way to a darker and sterner contraction of the rigid features, and he approached Elviga without one trace of loverlike warmth or even courteous deference in his mien or tone.

"Lady Elviga," he said, quietly seating himself on a chair that commanded a full view of her features, "I have requested—nay, insisted on—a private interview with you that we might fully understand each other, or, rather, that you might understand me. And I believe that you have sufficient sense and comprehension to understand that I am in earnest and shall act on what I have come to announce to you."

Elviga bowed haughtily. "I have no doubt that you will carry out your purposes, if they are in accordance with your own views and interests, prince," she said, with calm contempt more galling than any passion. "And it is far more agreeable to me that you should tell me the truth, instead of insulting me by professions of falsehood and heartless treachery."

"There we are perfectly in accord, fair Elviga," he replied. "You have certainly no claim to either the love or the consideration I was once prepared to show you. But still that does not alter my previous arrangements and intentions respecting you. I have made up my mind that you shall be my wife—ay, and show me the obedience and the duty of one; and should you ever disgrace the name I give you then the punishment will be as swift and as heavy as the crime."

Elgiva's cheeks crimsoned angrily.

"Prince, this passes patience. Another such insult and you shall never be admitted into my presence whatever may be the cost. How dare you connect one thought of such degradation with the name of Arnheim?"

"No, it would by no means be the first time that a stain clung to the vaunted race," he replied, carelessly. "And you will allow that I have reasons to suspect one who lavishes her care and tenderness on a low-born vagrant. It is perhaps well for you, lady, that he should be removed from putting any temptation in your way, or your haughty vaunt might have been misplaced."

"Then I am right! It was by your agency that he was taken from his refuge. You have perhaps completed the crime you began," exclaimed the girl, vainly trying to restrain her emotions.

"Pardon me, you do me great injustice, lady," returned the prince, calmly. "Or, perhaps, as some might say, too great a compliment to my skill and courage. I am perfectly innocent of or rather unconnected with the extraordinary event to which you allude; and if the unlucky young fellow has been carried away in a coffin so much the better for him—say, and you also very probably. But, whatever may be my suspicions, I for one have no knowledge whatever either of the deed itself, its manner or time, or the place to which he was conveyed."

"Can I believe you? Are you really speaking the truth?" said Elgiva, doubtfully.

"You can do as you wish," he answered, coldly. "It is exactly as I have informed you; and now we will leave so profitless a subject. I have to speak of my future plans and yours. No doubt the count has told you that I intend to leave this country for a few months. In the meantime you will have leisure to prepare for quitting your native land and taking up your high position in your future husband's home, and I, when I return, shall bring with me such undoubted proofs of the circumstances to which I allude that you can have no hesitation in acting upon them. It would be a pity for any most useless and degrading strife to arise, it would be like the struggle of a poor fish on the hook, only adding torture to its captivity. Mark me, I spare you every expression of needless affection, and do not require any from you. We shall not be the first couple who depend rather on gifts than on outward affection for happiness."

Elgiva paused for a few moments ere she spoke again.

"Prince," she returned, "I have listened patiently to you, now I will answer in my turn. Not one word of what you have said will have the slightest influence with me. I trust in my own innocence and in Heaven, which you openly defy, and the courage it can give to endure all that I may risk by my resistance to your imperious, selfish cruelty. I shall use every engine in my power on behalf of those whom you so basely threaten; while I defy and despise your schemes for myself. Now, as you said but now, we understand each other, and this interview had better close. I have the honour to wish you a very pleasant and prosperous journey and to bid you farewell."

Rising from her chair, she bent her head with the proud grace of a queen dismissing some inferior from her audience than a threatened and endangered maiden.

"Stay," he returned as she waved her hand in a kind of proud adieu. "Stay, lady Elgiva, one moment. I do not love you, but I can endure and appreciate your spirit, even when so agreeably directed against my unfortunate self. I would not have you rush uselessly and blindly into danger that you cannot even suspect. Know then that there is a power ranged against you that you may as vainly attempt to resist as a child could a mighty engine whose springs he is foolish enough to touch. I have dare not set in resistance to it, albeit I can guide it so far as its rules permit. If you force me to put it in action against you I should be powerless to arrest its awful machinery, even were I so inclined. Now you comprehend the danger you incur, and your peril will be on your own head. No prayers or tears could move either it or me if it be once set in its awful motion. For every sake be warned. It is surely no great penalty to be a princess with wealth and rank and lands as an appanage. Now, fair rebel, I return your farewell. We shall meet again on different terms ere many months are past."

With as proud a reverence as her own he took her hand in his, and lifting it to his lips, passed slowly from the room with a thoughtful rather than enraged or resentful air.

Elgiva remained in shuddering fear, which, in spite of her utmost efforts, chilled her very heart and stopped its pulsations for the moment.

She guessed but too well the meaning of those terrible threats. She knew that there were fearful engines at work that would not be resisted, because they

were so terribly secret in their machinery. She knew that the land from which that dreaded man came, was the very hotbed of their growth.

As she contemplated the terrible, vague gloom that hung over the future even her spirit shook within her, and she realized the unequal combat she was about to wage with unseen hands wielding their weapons in the dark with irresistible power.

#### CHAPTER XX.

Who hath not proved how feebly words essay  
To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray?  
Who doth not feel, until his fading sight  
Faints into dimness with its own delight,  
His changing cheek, his sinking heart, confess  
The might, the majesty of love's loveless?

TIME had passed on, and the eve of the London season once more arrived.

It was not yet that perfect realization of the gaiety and tumult for which Easter appeared to be the signal. But there was even a better chance for a successful *début* of any novelty, whether in the shape of public perfumes or lovely *débutantes*, since there was less to distract the attention and share the admiration of the crowd.

In this case there seemed to be just one wonderful and hitherto unknown attraction to occupy the gay world, and to divert it from the hitherto engrossing subject of the murmured marriage of the beautiful heiress of two great families ere there had been time or opportunity for a fair and free contest for the prize.

"Have you heard that there is scarcely any doubt of the betrothal of that splendid girl who only just peeped out last spring?" asked Sir Francis Brydges of the Marquis of Easton as they met one dreary day in Lent at the refuge for such unfortunate victims—the club-house.

"What—you mean the daughter of the old Count Arnheim, I suppose?" returned Lord Easton, carelessly. "Well, I have no objection. She was far too magnificent for me in her pretensions; though really she was a brilliant creature, no doubt. But there one cannot go in against a prince with at least a hundred drops of royal blood and a dozen quarterings to boot. I could see pretty plainly how matters stood at her *débutante* ball in the castle. But, by Jove!" he suddenly exclaimed, "only look there, and then talk as you like about the lovely Elgiva."

The young marquis pointed as he spoke to an open carriage which was passing at the moment, and which contained two ladies of widely different ages and appearance.

One of them was of that ordinary type which might almost be painted without actual contact with the individual.

She was a middle-aged, well-bred matron, who evidently comprehended her position as the chaperone of the fair creature at her side, and felt no little pride in such a distinction.

Nor could it excite much surprise if such was the case, for few would have turned away from that beautiful face without a lingering look.

Even the half-glance obtained as the carriage passed by was sufficient to discover a brilliant pair of eyes, perfectly chiselled features, a complexion like cream in its soft purity, and a form of singular grace in its attitude and lightness of proportion.

Lord Easton scarcely waited for his companion's reply ere he seized his hat, and, rushing down the wide staircase, he cast himself into a hansom cab that happened to be passing, and ordered the driver to keep the carriage in view, without appearing too evidently bent on the pursuit, and he should be amply rewarded for his skill and trouble.

There was however, small scope for either.

The ladies stopped at a music shop in Piccadilly, and Lord Easton, having alighted from his cab and followed them, had the satisfaction of hearing them secure tickets for the opera, which was to open for the first time on the following evening. It was a rare—very rare thing for the young, bold, biased marquis to honour the opera-house with his presence till the arrival of the stars who wait till Easter had passed for their *début*. But no sooner had the shopman re-entered the house, and the carriage was driven off, than he at once lounged into the shop, and secured a stall ticket for the same night as the mysterious beauty, and then, quietly returning to the cab, sought his own apartments to analyze his own plans and purposes and consider the possibility of his wild fancies being founded on anything but the myth which had haunted him ever since his meeting with that spirit-like beauty at Chetwode Castle.

There was, perhaps, a rather unusual attraction in that "opening" night, for a new, though not very celebrated singer, was to make her appearance for the first time.

The attendance was certainly above the average on such an occasion, both as to beauty and fashion, in the gay boxes that lined the walls.

But every eye was turned on one box, and every glass pointed at one tenant of that conspicuous spot, and whispers and inquiries were heard on every side as to the identity of the beautiful being who, for the first time, shone out like a new star in that brilliant firmament.

"By Jove! what a girl, and in such a picturesque costume! She knows how to dress herself, that's certain. Not one woman in a thousand could stand that dress," said Sir Francis Brydges to a friend near him. "Did you ever see such daring colours and yet such complete simplicity? No one can mistake that hers is real, genuine beauty, that's certain."

He was right.

The same lovely stranger who had attracted the attention of the clubs on the previous day was sitting in the careless pride of her natural attractions, apparently unmindful of the homage she won.

Her rich hair had but one diamond pin placed in the scarlet ribbon that was entwined with its network of braids.

Her robe was of amber, crossed over her perfect bust, and fastened by the same rare and precious gems, while at her waist was a zone of most peculiar and brilliant workmanship.

Few would have become such brilliant colours and such complete and trying simplicity of dress, but the effect was strikingly bewitching, and fairly evet in the shade the more stereotyped and modish toffets of the belles who surrounded this remarkable *débutante*.

"Do you see? Easton knows her. He has just entered the box, and—look! what a smile she has given him!" continued the young man who had just spoken. "And, by Jove, she receives him as if she were perfectly unconscious that he is one of the crack matches of the day—as cool and proud as if she had passed through at least half a dozen seasons, though this must be her first. She is certainly not eighteen."

Perhaps the astonishment would have been greater had it been known that the recipient of the homage of this envied mark for mothers and daughters had passed her earlier years in the rustic solitude of forest life, that her usual attire had been that of a Zingara girl, and her companions the rude, if romantic, dwellers in tents and woods.

Nor could Lord Easton have believed that the composed, even haughty beauty who designed to vouchsafe a courteous reception with bright smiles and flashing eyes was but lately broken-hearted and resentful at the desertion of a friendless and obscure gipsy youth.

"I told you we should meet again, Madlle. De Castro," he began, under cover of a noisy dram.

"It was impossible that you could disappear like an eclipsed star from the heavens, yet, I confess, this is even more happy fortune than I had hoped. Where have you hidden yourself since your retreat from that well-remembered ball?"

She smiled slightly, but not so as to disguise a row of most exquisite pearly teeth as she replied:

"Oh, in more than one locality, my lord. My last was in London. I have been here for six weeks and more."

"In the dreary Lent time?" he asked, in surprise. "I could hardly have believed any one would have been guilty of such cruelty as to condemn you to a penance little short of a convent."

"Suppose I like a convent," she said, with a touch of haughtiness; "is it so unusual a taste?"

"Yes; in our country—perhaps not in yours," he said, hesitatingly. "Are you a Catholic, Madlle. De Castro?"

The girl looked fairly perplexed now.

Her large eyes turned with a kind of mute appeal to her chaperone, and she recovered herself sufficiently to turn the inquiry on another subject.

"You spoke of my country, my lord. I have none. I have been a wanderer in so many lands that I claim none for my own," she said, with an arch smile. "But, at least, it has this advantage that I can speak more tongues than the harsh English which is so foreign to all harmony."

"Surely the country in which you were born must be your native land, the language you first lisped your proper tongue," replied the young man, with an earnestness that had surely some deeper motive than mere curiosity for its motive.

But Amice De Castro made no reply, and the marquis hastily repaired the offence he had unintentionally given.

"There can be little question of your origin, at any rate," he resumed, in a lower tone; "you can scarcely be

"Born of mortal strain,"

to judge from your angelic perfections. Do you know, Madlle. De Castro, you have never ceased to haunt my dreams and live in my waking thoughts since that night when I first met you at Chetwode?"

"Even though the heiress was the queen of the

ball," said the girl, with a covert triumph in her tone and look.

"The Lady Elgiva is but an ordinary though very beautiful girl," returned Lord Easton. "She is not one to haunt the memory and catch the fancy and imagination like yourself, fair Amice."

Had the gipsy girl been more trained in the world's ways and the conventional manner of fashionable life she might have shrunk from and resented even the freedom of these flatteries. But the pride that still smarted under the preference of Elgiva of Arnhem by her own forest cousin to herself was soothed by the whispered and honeyed tones that resounded in her ears from one whom she knew to be nobly born and wealthy as Juan was poor and obscure.

"Ah, my lord," she replied, "you are but laughing at the simplicity of a lowly maiden by venturing to place me even on a level with the daughter of a noble race. How do you know that I am not a mere rustic in birth as well as in my untutored ways?"

"If it were so it would shame the heralds," replied the marquise. "There is rather the trace of royal blood than ignoble birth in all that surrounds you. Were I told otherwise I would declare that some fairy had been spiteful at your birth and made you a changeling."

The chapereone, who had been most conveniently deaf to all but music during this dialogue, now suddenly woke up to the fact of the opera's close.

"Amice, my dear, we must go. Perhaps Lord Easton will see for your carriage."

"Yes, if I may be rewarded by the permission to inquire for your health on the morrow," he said, eagerly. "Surely you will not again tantalize me with a disappearance from this lower world, fair spirit."

An arch smile from the younger and more formal reply from the elder lady gave assent to the request.

(To be continued.)

**MRS. ALSAGER.**—The Emperor of Germany has conferred the Order of the Iron Cross on Mrs. Alsager, a lady well known through her connection with the hospitals of Saarbrücken during the Franco-Prussian war. Her unwearying exertions on behalf of the sick and wounded had already been recognized by a number of medical officers stationed in that town, who, on the conclusion of peace, presented her with a handsome bracelet.

**PURIFICATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE.**—Mr. W. T. Cooper has proposed "effectually to purify the atmosphere." He says: Having during the last five years made experiments which had been corroborated by several of the most eminent chemists of the day, and having also had the help of engineers in making proper calculations, he asserted with confidence that at a cost of 200,000*l.* per annum, or 1*s.* per head, the atmosphere of London could be kept free from the noxious exhalations arising from the drains.

**THE LATE KING OF SWEDEN.**—The late King of Sweden and Norway, who died on the 18th ult. on his way from Aix-la-Chapelle to his capital, deserves mention as one of the few monarchs of the day who have ranked among authors. His essays on military subjects were by no means despicable productions, and he was a frequent contributor to the Swedish newspapers. The bitter tone of some of his articles gave considerable offence to the Germans. He was born May 3rd, 1826, and began to reign on the 8th July, 1859. His successor, Prince Oscar, is well known as a man of talent.

**THE NEW KING OF SWEDEN AND NORWAY.**—The next brother of the late King Carl—namely, Oscar, Duke of Östergötland—who has just been proclaimed King of Sweden and Norway, under the title of Oscar II., has hitherto held the rank of Lieutenant-general in the army, and also that of vice-admiral in the Swedish and Norwegian fleets. He is three years younger than his late brother, having been born on the 21st of January, 1829. He married, in June, 1857, the Princess Sophia of Nassau, daughter of the late Duke Wilhelm of Nassau, who was born in July, 1836. From this union there are four sons, namely: Gustaf, Duke of Värmland, born in June, 1858, now heir-apparent to the throne; Oscar, Duke of Götland, born in November, 1859; Carl, Duke of Westergötland, born in February, 1861; and Eugene, Duke of Nerike, born in August, 1865. The late sovereign had a civil list of about 78,700*l.* as King of Sweden, and about 32,000*l.* more as King of Norway; besides which the royal family enjoy an annuity of 800,000 riksdaler, or 16,666*l.*, voted to King Carl XIV. and his successors on the throne of Sweden.

**FLORINS AND HALF-CROWNS.**—A "Country Banker" has done a public service in directing attention to the fact that in calling in half-crowns and substituting florins Mr. Lowe is not studying the convenience of Her Majesty's subjects. The reason is that "while the half-crown performs the function

of both the shilling and the sixpence the florin performs that of the shilling only." The writer quotes his own case:—"I require for the wants of my branch a comparatively large sum of silver per annum. In one instance lately, when the stock was entirely exhausted, a remittance of 500*l.* reached me, which consisted of 300*l.* in florins and 200*l.* in shillings, so that I had not a coin which could do the duty of a sixpence, whereas, had the 300*l.* been in half-crowns, I would have had eight sixpences to each pound—each very conveniently attached to a florin. If the florin displaces the half-crown, a great many more sixpences must be coined, which will often gather together in large and very inconvenient numbers, while the converse, equally inconvenient, will also probably occur."

#### IN THE CLOVER FIELDS.

THE scent of hay is rife in the air,  
And is blown the green lane over,  
And the breezy bees boom everywhere  
Among the red-topped clover.  
I hear the woodpecker pounding a tree,  
And a lapping's cry from the meadows,  
And a linnet's note rings merry and free  
From the depths of the hemlock shadows.

But a gloom is over the fair scene thrown,  
Its beauty and music are banished,  
For now I roam the green lane alone,  
And sigh for a form that has vanished—  
For her who was once my comrade sweet,  
A phantom of summers olden,  
When we wandered afar with idle feet,  
And to none but ourselves were beholden.

All nature seemed but the soft reflex  
Of our love as we loitered together—  
A love which no storm could trouble or vex—

Always fair, sunshiny weather.  
The hum of bees, the voices of birds,  
The sound of the rivulet falling,  
Were the tones of our hearts in unsyllabled words,  
Each to the other calling.

There is the seat where she loved to rest,  
Where I took her white hands and pressed them;

The turf is still with wild flowers dressed,  
Though darkened the eyes that blessed them.

Our little boat still swings in the stream,  
But the sport of the ripples only;  
Yonder winds our woodland path like a dream,  
But silent and sad and lonely.

And there is the pool where many a day  
For the pure pond lilies I waded;  
Its waters have nearly dried away,  
The lilies all have faded.

And this is the lane that passes below  
To the little church in the hollow;  
No matter how lonely it seemeth now,  
Its course I even must follow.

For it skirts the church-yard, gray with age,  
Where long she has softly slumbered,  
And I make it my frequent pilgrimage,  
When my heart is sore encumbered.

The peace of the spot is a holy peace,  
And here I may one day merit,  
From trouble and sorrow and grief surcease,  
For body and heart and spirit.

N. D. U.

#### SCIENCE.

**MACHINE FOR DRYING PORCELAIN CLAY.**—A machine has recently been invented by Signor Leopoldo Henrion, a mechanical engineer of Sampierdarena, near Genoa, for drying porcelain clay or potter's earth. This operation, which is a most tedious one in our damp climate (England), can be effected in a few hours by this machine at a relatively small cost. The importance of this invention can readily be imagined, as by the present system eight months are required to dry the clay to the required consistency and fit it for the market.

**PRIZE CABS.**—The Council of the Society of Arts have issued a paper announcing their intention to give a prize of 60*l.* for the best improved cab of any description; two prizes for the next two best, and two prizes of 10*l.* each for the next two best. The competing cabs must be exhibited at the International Exhibition to be held in South Kensington in 1873, and on their delivery at the Exhibition building they must be certified to the satisfaction of the judge as having been in regular use in the streets of

London or other city or town of the United Kingdom for three months previously.

**EXPERIMENTS WITH COAL.**—A German has made experiments to ascertain the amount of loss that coal undergoes when exposed to the weather. It will perhaps surprise many readers to hear that the loss is considerable. Anthracite and cannel-coal, as might be anticipated from their compactness, suffer least; but ordinary bituminous coal loses nearly one-third in weight and nearly one-half in gas-making quality. From this it will be understood that coal should be kept dry and under cover; and that to expose it to rain or damp is to lessen its quantity and weaken its quality. Here too we have an explanation of the inferiority of the great heaps of small-coal which encumber the ground in the mining districts.

**GROWTH OF CORALS.**—An interesting fact has recently been observed respecting the growth of corals. Somewhat less than two years ago Captain McGregor, of the steamer "Kilauea," moored a buoy in Keala-kokus Bay. A few days ago he was ordered to hoist the anchor and examine the condition of the chain. The latter, which is a heavy two-inch cable, was found covered with corals and oyster shells, some of which are as large as a man's hand. The larger corals measure 4½ in. in length, which represents their growth during the period of two years that the anchor and cable had been submerged. The specimen which we have seen shows the nature of its formation by the little coral insects more distinctly than any we have before examined. When taken out of the water it had small crabs on it. A query arises whether these crabs live on the coral insects or whether they simply seek the branches of the coral for protection. The popular supposition is that corals are of extremely slow growth. Here we have a formation equal to over 17 ft. in a century.

**THE SUN'S PARALLAX.**—At the instance of the Minister of Public Instruction, the French Assembly voted a credit of 4,000*l.* in the budget of the present year for the construction of the necessary instruments for the determination of the parallax. It is now reported that a farther sum of 8,000*l.* is to be voted for the coming year. The next transit at Venus, as is well known, takes place in 1874; it will occur again in 1882, and then not again till the year 2002. Nine stations have been selected for observation; at four of these, namely, Pekin, Yokohama, the islands of St. Paul and Bourbon, both the entry and exit of the planet will be observable; at the other stations, which are Noumea, Tahiti, the Marquesan Islands, Suva, and Mascate, only one or the other of the two incidents will be visible. The set of apparatus to be used at each station includes parallactic telescopes, sidereal clock, marine chronometer, meridian circle, barometers, thermometers, electric piles, etc. The French *savans* are in communication with those of England, Russia, America, and Germany, in order that each may select different stations, and thus avail themselves of all the useful points of the earth's surface for these important observations. All the apparatus prepared in France for the transit of 1874 will be afterwards distributed amongst the observatories of Marseilles, Toulouse, and Puy de Dôme, there to be carefully preserved for the next occurrence of the phenomenon.

**A NEW MODE OF STREET WATERING.**—An excellent application of Mr. Isaac Brown's invention to street watering may be seen in operation at Stortford. Some of the principal streets for the length of 1,000 yards are watered by fine jets from lead piping laid down in the foot pavement just on the inner side of the kerb-stones, the little gutter in which the pipe is inserted being filled up with asphalt, excepting, of course, where the spouting holes are exposed, these places having small iron caps or shields to prevent injury of the pipe while giving free egress to the up-shooting jets. It appears that by directing the jets in arches no higher than horses' legs, or by watering half the width of the roadway at once, there need be no hindrance to traffic or discomfort to passengers in open vehicles. The economy is great, for it would cost only 1,000*l.* to lay down the apparatus along the five miles of street and road in Bishop's Stortford, and one man could then water the whole place in half an hour. As it is, the Local Board has now to spend 250*l.* a year in the slower process of water-carting. An experiment with this method was made some time ago in Hyde Park; but, we believe, without the modification just alluded to. Another trial is now in process at the Pavilion, Brighton, and the Esplanades at Brighton New Town are to be watered on this permanent system. Why have not trial pipes been laid down alongside the asphalted streets in the metropolis? The objections as to alarming horses or obstructing traffic have been overcome; and, as proved by experience in Paris, water is the only thing wanted to render impossible that greasy condition of the adamantine surface which alone is to blame for tripping up so many horses.



[A ROYAL VILLAIN.]

## THE SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

### CHAPTER I.

Something the heart must have to cherish,  
Must love and joy and sorrow learn;  
Something with passion clasp or perish,  
And in itself to ashes burn.

*Longfellow.*

THE broad Bavarian sunshine fell warmly upon a woman wandering slowly amid tiny beds of blossoming plants.

Now she stooped close to some fragrant heart in the midst of a dainty crown of petals, and handled it with tender and loving fingers, as though almost she believed an answering soul lingered there, and anon she carefully removed an insect, or dead leaf, or atom of earth from the branches of the shrubs about her.

But oftentimes she stopped abruptly, and, folding her arms, lifted up her pale, sad face to the smiling sky, asking mutely, it would seem, for some miraculous visitation.

The garden was peculiar, as its mistress was striking in appearance. It was not an ordinary flower-bed, lotted off from a verdant lawn, or sloping bank, or broad field, but a garden up in mid-air, on the top of a high and solitary building, to whose flat roof soil had been transported and plants set out. A strong iron railing, higher than the tallest person's head, walled about this novel garden, over whose wicker-work vines were trailing in rich, luxurious masses.

A tiny fountain played in the centre bed, and near by a little arbour, thickly screened by climbing roses, held its inviting rustic seat.

At the eastern side was a door, swinging open like a trap, which revealed a flight of stairs, leading into the building below.

The landscape without had few attractions.

The building was set in a hollow, and all around were dense woods, rising gradually with the land, and shutting off with their dark, sombre foliage all hints of any life beyond.

Not another roof, no sign of human vicinity was observable.

The lady—that she was not of low or plebeian blood was betrayed by every look and gesture—gave a single glance off to the surrounding dreary country. When her attention left the flowers it was turned upward to the broad blue, as if seeking to pierce through the ether to the unknown sphere above.

Therefore when, through a narrow road, cleared in a zig-zag line through the forest, there came canter-

ing a party of three horsemen, she was not aware of their approach until the noise of hoof-falls was near enough to reach her ears, and then the high vine-twined fencing hid them from her view. She turned her head and listened, until there came a confused murmur of voices and the clang of some heavy gate shutting after them as the horsemen rode into the courtyard.

Then a singular look, blending unutterable anguish and fierce determination, swept across her eyes—those large brilliant orbs, of such rare and matchless blue that they would have made beautiful a face even of unlovely features. But hers were symmetrical and delicate, and though it was evident that she was long past the bloom of youth, and had been scathed by some heavy sorrow, she was still a beautiful and rarely graceful woman.

After some little time she heard a slow and heavy step upon the stairs. At the sound of the first foot-fall the lady bent down and began plucking the half-opened roses on the bush near her.

"My lady," called in German a stolid voice, "my lady, his royal highness is here. He summons you to an audience below."

The stately head rose more haughtily.

"Why waste your breath idly, good Seippel? You know I will never answer such summons."

A shock of sandy hair had by this time appeared through the trap-door, and as it raised itself farther the dull, perplexed peasant face of Seippel came to view.

"But, my lady, his royal highness bade me—"

"You have done your duty. You have delivered the message. Go then and say to the man below that I bade you reply for me that I would not stir one inch from my place at command or entreaty of his."

Poor Seippel stood a moment fidgeting, twisting his fingers together nervously, and then, as she turned away and resumed her employment, he made good his retreat.

She dropped her hand from the flowers the moment she was sure of his departure, and pressed it hard and fiercely against her heart, and stood thus, never stirring so much as to lift the long, golden-fringed eyelash, until the creaking stairs betrayed another and still heavier tread. Then she bent down again, and seemed absorbed in the roses.

The new comer's face was flushed, his eye angry, when he appeared upon the scene. He was a man, richly clad, with a glittering order on his breast, which was revealed by the open travelling cape thrown half aside in the hasty entrance, but his countenance was sensual, brutal, and vindictive. He spoke in a coarse, guttural voice.

"So you will preserve your wilfulness, my lady?"

One would think the long years might have taught you the folly of such behaviour. By Heaven! such an insolent message should have received prompt punishment upon the spot. I have a mind yet to begin with you as I would with a rebellious slave, and try what the lash can do."

She never cast so much as a look towards him, but went on gathering roses, taking apparent pains to select the freshest and finest and to place them in becoming position in the bouquet. How wondrously graceful she looked, how fair and charming, for all the silver sprinkling in the golden brown hair!—the signs of weary years and wasting sorrows—how wondrously noble and dignified!

The royal villain gnashed his teeth with rage as he looked.

"Minion!" he exclaimed, wrathfully, "you hold out your pride and your obstinacy well. But I have not tried half my powers of torment yet. I came to tell you news."

Had the gentle zephyrs alone disturbed the peaceful silence there, she had not looked more unconscious or indifferent, gently breaking the stem of another flower.

He muttered fiercely and strode forward, and laid a rude hand on her shoulder.

"Minion, I command you to listen! I say I come to bring you momentous tidings!"

She shook off the touch with such a look as she might have given at the vicinity of the most loathsome reptile, and sprang to the other side of the walk, facing him at last with her deadly white face and those blazing blue eyes.

He laughed jeeringly.

"So you are aware of your master's presence at last? Will you never learn how you might be happy?"

"Happy!"

There was a world of bitterness and horror in the tone.

"Yes, happy—resigned to inexorable circumstances, willing to take the brightness and pleasure I offer you," he continued, softening his tone and endeavouring to assume a persuasive mildness. "Come, foolish one; put off this hard resentment—avert, while it is possible, the terrible fate which you know lies in my hands for you. You must acknowledge my power. You see how hopeless must be your most plausible expectation of escape. You have tried it and failed a dozen times in these long fifteen years that you have lived alone in this dreary prison. How has it been possible for you to hold out so long? It is as wonderful as that my love has also endured, even though you have changed into a faded but I admit still charmingly lovely woman. My Lady Pauline, listen to reason. Answer me kindly,

and I will forswear the revenge that nothing but your yielding can balk me of."

He took another step toward her, extending a white hand, on which glittered a massive seal ring bearing the arms of the royal line.

A smile of ineffable scorn flashed across her marble-white face.

"Man, do you think constancy is impossible? I tell you, though you keep me here thrice fifteen years longer, I shall still despise and abhor and defy you?"

"Do you dare me thus boldly?" he demanded, fiercely. "I marvel at my own patience. Here you are completely at my mercy, and I neither scourge nor kill you. Ah, well, it is because I hold the winning card that has not yet been brought forward, and I can afford to laugh at your idle passion and your obstinate coldness. I have been too lenient hitherto, but yet I confess it was not without motive. I was afraid your mind would give way, and thus cheat me of the most exquisite zest of my long-plotted revenge. I left you to your sweet will in the garden here. I see that you have enjoyed it. It would be a poor punishment for me to give you stinging blows, for the smart would heal quickly. I know a better way."

He laughed again in his horrible, sardonic fashion, and glanced meaningfully around the lovely beds blooming so charmingly with flowers of every hue.

"I have brought a few letters for your entertainment," he continued. "You were wont to be of an inquiring mind, I believe. I have no doubt you will find them of interest. And here is a picture. See, is it not a sweet young face? Faith, it costs me a pang to yield so fair a flower to one of my courtiers. But to carry out my long-cherished plan I must deny myself some delights. Sebastian Schroeder will be the gainer."

The stately head never turned in his direction. The dazling blue eyes were on the scarcely as blue heavens.

"It is a pity you can't close your ears also, my lady," he scoffed. "But you hear, and every word cuts home, though your proud heart will not betray it. But do not think your powers of defence are quite invulnerable. I have spared you hitherto because I wanted you to come to this hour fresh and strong, capable of enduring an agony which weakness is fortunate to faint under. I am only beginning my torments; before they are half expended you will bend the knee in supplication, you will accept my friendship, you will confess where you have hidden those important papers."

"Never!" burst forth from her, passionately; "never, pitiable tyrant. I am beyond your power even now. You may imprison me—what care I, since there is no charm left in all the earth to which I can respond? You may torture me—I can bear it, unless it goes too far; then that will be the happiest release of all, for I can die, and join my beloved in heaven."

"Wait until you know what trial will come to you, madam, before you are too confident. I tell you that you will yield even the papers, or the knowledge of their hiding-place. Why, indeed, should you not? What possible use are they to you, shut up here for life?"

"Some time they will clear my husband's honourable name and prove your villainy. I would die a dozen deaths by torture rather than yield them up to you."

He gazed upon the undaunted face with malignant fury.

"Idiot! read the letters, and see what blessing you are forfeiting by this obstinacy."

He tossed a package of letters to her feet. She glanced at them disdainfully, but made no effort to raise them.

He only laughed as he turned.

"I can afford to try a new plan," he sneered.

Proceeding to the head of the stairs, he blew a summons upon a golden whistle hanging from a massive chain across his breast.

Seippel came promptly, and bent low in reverence.

"Ho, there! bring hoes and shovels, and such implements as you need to root up these foolish plants. I have a fancy to be amused with watching the rubbish cleared away. In an hour I must not see a root or flower here."

Seippel glanced around at the lovely Eden, and even his stolid face blanched.

"Go to! the reward for diligent labour lessens with every moment you linger," said the master, impatiently, and after a glance at the face which still held its icy mask he sat down and hummed softly to himself a gay melody.

She stood as if rooted to the spot, the package of letters at her feet.

In a few moments more some men were heard ascending the stairs, laden with their heavy implements.

"This first," said the prince, rabbing his white hands as if in enjoyment of some excellent jest.

And he marched up to a tall wooden crucifix,

around which a magnificent passion-flower had been carefully taught to twine its luxurious growth, and at whose base a marble slab made a sort of altar, on which lay an exquisitely arranged wreath and star of choicest blossoms.

By dint of stout efforts the slab was tumbled off and the vase containing the wine overturned.

"Heave them over the fence," commanded the master.

The next instant it was done, and they heard the heavy thud and the crash on the rocks below.

The lady's delicately cut nostril dilated a trifle wider, if it were possible her complexion grew a little ghastlier white, but the proud lip kept its defiant, contemptuous curl, and those wonderful eyes blazed luminously and fearlessly.

"Now uproot these paitry weeds."

The hand where blazed the potent signet ring waved carelessly to an oval in which blossomed shrubs that could have come to such perfection only through years of patient and loving care.

She had set them out, she had watched every leaf that added vigour to the tender shoot, she had nursed them and tended them from dewy morning till gathering eve, through weary years whose days had dragged like weeks and whose hours like days. They had been friends, companions, sweetest consolation, the one oasis in the monotonous desert of her life. But she stood motionless and erect and saw them ruthlessly torn away and flung over the railing in a rained heap below without so much as a quiver of the lip or the fluttering of an eyelid, for she knew the watchful eye was near that would gloat over every sign of anguish.

When the work of destruction was completed the prince rose from his seat and looked around with a smile of satisfaction upon the devastation.

What a pitiable sight it was—more forlorn even than seemed possible for vandal hands to accomplish.

Still erect and motionless, like a statue of fate, stood the mistress who had loved and patiently gathered together that lost beauty. At her feet were scattered fragments of pottery, crushed leaves and little rifts of earth, and the package of letters still lay there also.

Slowly the tyrant advanced towards her.

"My lady, I wish you joy of your bower. I trust it will sweeten your disposition to remember that had you received me even respectfully it had remained unseathed. I leave you the letters. I know you will read them, because they will prove to you a cheat I have played upon you these fifteen years back. You will learn by them that one of your beloved ones still lives in my power. You will look at the picture the next time I come. I'll make a wager of that. I bid you adieu, fair Lady Pauline."

He swept her a mocking bow, doffing his hat, and then descended the stairs slowly.

Seippel, casting a compassionate look behind him, followed.

His companions had previously withdrawn, bearing away the implements used in the cruel work.

The lady was alone at last, alone in her despoiled and ruined Eden. She gave one shuddering glance around, drew one long, shivering breath, and staggered against the railing for support. There she clung, silent and motionless, until the faintness had passed.

When she could walk steadily she made her way to the chair and sat down.

The ringing footfalls of the impatient horses announced to her the royal departure, something like an hour after.

She turned her eyes slowly as they came out into view.

Alas, the graceful, leafy curtain no longer obstructed her view. She sat erect, rigid and haughty until the horsemen were entirely lost to view.

Then, catching one long, sobbing breath, she sprang up and ran like a demented creature from one despoiled nook to another, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

"Oh, I loved them—I loved them! They kept me innocent company and beguiled my thoughts from my maddening wrongs, my cruel imprisonment. Wee is me—if I could only die!" she moaned.

In passing hastily from one point to another her feet touched the packet he had left.

She stood looking down upon it with something of the same loathing and defiant expression which she gave to him who had left it there.

Then some sudden impulse made her stoop and raise it.

"Anything, no matter what, to divert my thoughts from this cruel blow," she murmured, and sitting down untied the packet and opened the letters.

At the very first glance her eyes deepened and widened, a low exclamation escaped her, and then she read on swiftly, with a feverish, absorbed desperation that scarcely allowed breath.

When the last had fallen away from her icy fingers she sprang up and stretched forth her hands to the sky.

"Oh, Heaven, if you are not for ever deaf to the

cry of injured innocence, hear me now. Help me! help me! I must escape! I will escape if I perish in the attempt! Oh, help me, help me!"

The wail was almost a shriek. She ran to the railing and looked wildly down the dizzy depth below. She fled down the stairs, and passed swiftly through a suite of comfortably furnished rooms, and wrenched with her delicate hands at every solid iron bar that protected the windows. Thence she darted to a massive door, iron clamped, trobly looked, and barred without, and beat in helpless, impotent rage against it.

All was vain and useless. As well might a child attempt to snap a sturdy oak. She went back slowly to the roof, the once blooming oasis, and looked around blankly.

At length she fell upon her knees.

"Not even the crucifix or the altar left," she moaned; "but, if Heaven hears, I will not despair yet."

And even while the faint accents came she fell forward prone amid the ruin, the white, beautiful features gleaming like marble indeed, and as icy cold.

Seippel, coming up, found her senseless.

## CHAPTER II.

"Twas a goodly pile of ancient stone,  
And it stood in frowning grace,  
Telling of many ages gone  
O'er a proud and ducal race."

Miss Cool.

"YONDER, my friend, are Schwarzenburg Heights."

The words were brief, and held simple meaning, but it was the tone of the speaker's voice that said so much.

"How grandly beautiful!" returned Aubrey Dalberg, his enthusiasm by no means feigned. "My dear Count Roderich, I do not wonder you are proud of your home. It looks to me, from this approach, as the one spot in all my travels to which I cannot imagine an added charm."

"I was sure that it must please you," returned the young German nobleman, smiling warmly upon his friend, and then turning to gaze again, with kindling eyes, upon the scene.

The two young gentlemen were mounted upon a pair of sleek roan horses, and had checked the animals at the bend of the highway, which here branched into two separate roads—one winding down around the slope of the hill, and the other cutting a straight, sharp pathway down to the river's brink. They were on the brow of the hill; and below them lay outspread as fair a landscape as the ardent lover of the picturesque could desire.

First of all, most prominent in the view, was the river, broad and full, and "deeply dark blue"—the beautiful river that Dalberg had followed in his travels, mile upon mile, lingering here at the proud old cities, and there at some castle-crowned crag, and always finding something charming, albeit weird and strange, upon its picturesque banks.

On the right and on the left it spread forth majestically, but immediately in front of them the blue flash of rippling water was broken up by a small island formed of triple hills, the central one the highest, the outlines of the three shaded off by the dark green foliage of magnificent trees, and sloping away in the most graceful lines, while, below, terraces of velvety turf and sloping lawns of emerald hue, out clear and sharp by white avenues winding upward, showed it was a spot of careful culture.

Above, crowning the central light, rose the graceful chimneys and the square towers of an enormous building, massive enough for a fortress, and as grand a specimen of architecture as a royal palace.

Behind the island spread again the blue glitter of the divided river, and then the villa-sprinkled shore, and for a background rose the distant mountain peaks, their tops silver-white with unmelting snows.

This lovely isle did not lie in the centre of the river, but was nearer the shore below them by one-half at the least than to the opposite banks. With this shore it was connected by a long arched bridge, which formed as picturesque a feature as the scene offered.

"How very beautiful!" repeated Aubrey Dalberg. "Do you know, Count Roderich, I am almost reluctant to take another step; I am afraid of dissolving a spell of enchantment."

"There is no fear," returned his companion. "The building is a very fine specimen of the old architecture. The house has wings and improvements dating through two centuries. My father will tell you about it. He will congratulate himself upon such an interested listener as you will be. I counted as much upon his gratification as upon yours, Meester Dalberg."

As he said the last he laughed, for his quaint pronunciation of English had been previously the subject of good-humoured banter between them.

"I suspect my admiration will seem very foolish and plebeian," returned Dalberg. "But it is genuine

notwithstand. "Is the bridge yonder the only method of approach to the isle?"

"Without a boat, yes. On the other side of the island is a wharf; but it is almost always on this side that visitors find admittance; for that side is rocky and precipitous, and one can only make the landing with caution. Both approaches are as jealously guarded as in the old feudal days, however. My father has revived the ancient fashion of keeping a sentinel on guard day and night. (Come, let us spur up our horses!) A trot across the bridge is an experience worth having."

With a light touch of the spur and a gay laugh, the pair went cantering down the slope and dashed upon the long, securely planked bridge.

As the young count had intimated, a soldierly-looking fellow, in a sort of liveried uniform, with a gun at his shoulder, stepped forth from a sentry-box and seemed about to challenge their approach; but the next instant swept off his close cap and presented arms, recognizing either the horses, or the young gentleman's person.

The latter nodded a good-humoured recognition of the salute, but did not rein in his horse, and they kept up the spirited canter until they neared the other end of the bridge, when the animals themselves came to an abrupt pause.

Here was another sentry-box, and a second soldier, a tall, brawny-chested fellow, who looked equal to the management of any two men of ordinary size, stepped forth.

"Ah, Seippel, a good day to you! All well at the Heights?" spoke the Count Roderich, leaning from his saddle to look into the man's face.

"All well, my lord," responded the man, with a sharp, inquiring glance at the new comer.

"No company there, I hope?" pursued Roderich.

"Except—none at all, my lord," returned Seippel, with a flash across his bright blue eyes that Aubrey Dalberg could not help fancying held mischievous amusement, and straightway he fell to wondering what the man had found in his companion's question to provoke such a sentiment.

The reverie was, however, quickly interrupted by the interesting objects which every turn of the smooth avenue presented. It was one succession of delightful surprises; and all the while the road was winding higher and higher, and Aubrey Dalberg would turn around in the saddle and look back over to the fair shores they had left behind, and back to the picturesque scenes about him, and hardly be content with but one pair of eyes to drink in so much loveliness.

His companion evidently enjoyed his delight, but withal there was a certain gravity, almost uneasiness, in his look.

"I wonder I have not heard more of the place from our tourists!" exclaimed Dalberg.

"Not many of them get over to the isle. My father guards it rather jealously," returned the other, smilingly.

"But I should think your countrymen at the metropolis would all be proud to sing its praises."

There came no answer to this, and Dalberg was too much occupied with gazing about him to press the question. The road wound now almost in a circle about the base of the hill. As the travellers reached the summit the magnificent old building rose up before them, its grand, gray lines cutting sharply against the vivid blue of the sky. Worthy indeed to be called a palace, the building was itself an unspoken poem.

Dalberg's admiration had passed beyond enthusiasm even and into an emotion that was too deep for speech.

So he only looked in silence.

The Count Roderich had noticed a tall figure pacing to and fro along a shaded walk at the right, and as a servant came hastily forth from some unseen outlook he dismounted and motioned for his companion, who had followed his example, to accompany him thither.

"I bring a guest to Schwarzenburg Heights, your lordship," said he; "a young tourist, whose acquaintance I have made at the capital. He is such an admirer of our German scenery, that I could not let him return without a glimpse of the Heights."

The tall, large-framed man turned and fixed on Aubrey Dalberg a pair of keen black eyes.

"Mr. Aubrey Dalberg—my father, the Baron Valentin Baer, resumed Roderich, not without a faint betrayal of agitation in his tones.

"You are welcome, my young friend," said the baron, in a deep and not unmusical voice, speaking, as his son had done, in very tolerable English. "I trust you have found your long journeying both profitable and entertaining."

"It is all delightful," returned Aubrey, eagerly; "but nowhere, never before, have I enjoyed anything like this!"

And he waved his hand towards the house, and fell again to gazing, with eyes that plainly betrayed his enjoyment and sincerity.

The baron's grave, dark face brightened.

He drew his son a step aside, and asked, in a low voice, earnestly:

"Has he heard—there at the capital? Does he know?"

"He knows nothing whatever of the curse—the blight which turns this paradise into something worse than the watery prison of Tantalus, if that is what you mean," replied the other, with a bitter smile.

"Then I may enjoy his company," exclaimed the baron, eagerly, and with a face quite changed from its first severe gravity turned back to young Dalberg, who was still gazing about him in keen enjoyment.

"I am exceedingly gratified to welcome such an appreciative guest, and warmly applaud Roderich's discretion in bringing you himself," said he, with a genial smile. "Pray do not linger any longer. Enter the old house, a kindly welcomed guest—a house, my friend, where kings and princes and famous men, whose names have rung like clarion notes throughout Europe, have been guests before you. Schwarzenburg Heights has borne no mean part in the great drama."

"One can read it on the venerable but still majestic walls. For the first time I can fully sympathize with and comprehend what must be the strength of a man's pride in such an ancestral home," returned the young man, warmly.

Something in the speech sent a black shadow chasing again across the baron's face, but it had gone the next moment as he led the way up the long flight of massive steps to the huge double door, grand with carvings, and surmounted by a heavy canopy of elaborated architecture which was held in place by two grinning gargoyles, under which stood gigantic stone knights, armed to the teeth and seeming to challenge any intruder's entrance.

The great doors swung open of themselves, and Aubrey Dalberg looked into a vast hall, which struck him with something of a cathedral's gloom and awe, it was so long and high.

"A place indeed for kings and heroes to be welcomed!" murmured Aubrey; "it seems presumptuous for any less noble to cross this charmed threshold."

The baron smiled proudly; his son glanced about him with a singular smile of bitter mockery.

"We will not linger now, at least. Let us hasten to refresh ourselves with bath and luncheon tray. We are filled with the dust of the highway. Your lordship will be good enough to dismiss us to the chambers for a time," said Roderich.

"Certainly. After which Herr Dalberg shall have plenty of time to examine the whole place. If he is a tourist his time is his own, and we may keep him until he is weary of us," replied the baron.

And forthwith the pair ascended the grand staircase, which was wide enough for six to pass up abreast.

A valet was waiting in the first of the suites of sumptuous rooms, and at a low-spoken order in German from Roderich, he bowed in humble obeisance, and motioned for Dalberg to follow him, leaving the way to the opposite corridor, where the latter found himself in possession of a richly furnished chamber.

While he was still gazing about him some one came to the open door and glanced in, and the valet dropped the dressing-gown he had brought forth from the wardrobe, with a look of peculiar deference and respect, and went hastily to answer his authoritative nod.

They spoke a moment in low tones, and Aubrey understood enough of German to comprehend that the valet was explaining his presence there. Then the stranger retreated, the valet closed the door and came back to his duty, assisting Aubrey at his toilet with the ready ease of long practice.

Half an hour afterwards the young gentlemen were sitting over the luncheon tray in a pretty parlour which led from Count Roderich's chamber.

The baron came in while yet they were discussing the tempting viands.

"Now then," he said, "if you are not tired, Herr Dalberg, you shall make thorough acquaintance with Schwarzenburg. I can show you apartments made sacred by the presence of many crowned heads and illustrious by the visits of some of the most famous men and women in the world's history. Come let me show you the old rooms. My other son and my daughter will join us at dinner. Till then I shall be selfish enough to claim you to myself. I do not often meet with a congenial spirit. I have seldom any interest in my visitors."

"I should think you might select them from the flower of the land," returned Aubrey, looking about him with an interest that did not pall. "As I told your son I only marvel that the fame of this beautiful spot has not been trumpeted throughout all Germany, and that I have not heard of you or met you at the capital."

Aubrey did not see the sudden, wining tremor that convulsed the baron's features, or the black gloom that fell upon his eyes, for he turned his face away quickly.

Roderich rose and walked to the window, drumming impatiently with his fingers upon the glass. The next moment the baron answered, in a calm voice, although husky with repressed emotion:

"You must not expect to see or to hear of me away from Schwarzenburg. I am a thorough recluse. I have dropped the world, and as a natural consequence the world has forgotten me. I hope you will not hear of me. I wish, if you have any friendship for me growing out of this visit, that you will not allow any one to mention my name or speak a word concerning me." Then he added, almost impatiently, while Aubrey Dalberg stood in embarrassed silence, scarcely knowing what to say in answer to this speech: "Come, let us proceed to explore the house. It can entertain you better than idle, personal gossip."

Aubrey followed him from one floor to another, more and more astonished at the magnificence and wealth, the priceless historical treasures stored within these walls, of which no breath of fame had come to him. He began to comprehend that there was some mystery connected with it all, to perceive something strange in the baron's words, and manner, and to be alert to watch for any explanation in a chance word or unguarded look.

"This is the picture gallery," he exclaimed, eagerly, as they passed through a long corridor and saw two wide doors flung open beneath a rich damask canopy, and had a view of the long line of panelled portraits within.

The baron strode forward with a fierce ejaculation:

"Catiffs! simpletons! who has dared——" he vociferated, in German.

A tall figure stepped forth from the silken hangings, and a steady voice said, quietly:

"It was I who ordered the doors to be opened and the sunlight admitted. The paintings are getting musty, and need drying. Besides, when the beauties of Schwarzenburg palace are exhibited to a stranger the picture gallery surely will not be passed by."

Was there any secret sarcasm or stinging thrust in the courteous words and smooth tone?

Aubrey Dalberg saw that the baron had turned deadly pale, that his hands were clenched, and his breath came in hoarse gasps. He turned about quickly, with his face to the wall, and stood thus through whatever conflict it was which shook his secret soul. Then he faced about, and looked over to the stranger, as if forgetting any other presence, and "Yes," said he, coldly and sternly, "I will visit the picture gallery. Lead on."

The tall stranger bowed again.

"Your lordship forgets that I have had no introduction to the gentleman."

Again the baron Baer gnawed fiercely at his pale lip, and conquered the rising wrath.

"Mr. Dalberg, this is Herr Von Schnbert, a very loyal and devoted subject of his royal highness, Prince Charles. That latter noble gentleman is never afraid to trust him with his advice or profound schemes."

Aubrey Dalberg could not help perceiving the sarcasm of this speech, or be unaware of the mutual antagonism betrayed by the gentlemen.

Von Schnbert, however, seemed to have the better control of himself of the two, and to retain command of his temper.

He bowed with easy grace.

"I am happy to make the acquaintance of Mr. Dalberg. I hope you find your residence in these parts agreeable."

Aubrey answered as briefly as possible.

Then Von Schnbert led the way to the open doors of the gallery, talking carelessly in a ready, off-hand style.

It was he who explained to Aubrey pictures after pictures of the long lines of grim warriors and queer ladies and related glibly little anecdotes of each.

The Baron Valentin stalked behind him in grim silence.

But Aubrey, who watched him furtively and discreetly, perceived that as they passed on, hearing the modern portraits, his face twitched nervously, and his lips grew more and more colourless.

A black curtain hung before the last panel, and Aubrey instinctively became aware that beneath it was the unknown cause of the baron's emotion.

The latter gave one quick, shuddering glance toward it, and a look of intense relief flashed across his eyes as he discovered the lowered curtain.

Von Schnbert's clear cold eye was upon him, and a sarcastic, exalting smile crossed his face as he stepped forward and flung up the black folds, saying:

"And this, Herr Dalberg, is the portrait of the last Baron Schwarzenburg's only son, a young man of exceedingly brilliant promise, but whose magnificent prospects were cut short by an untimely and violent death. Beside him is the inimitable likeness of the young wife whose tender heart was also broken by that terrible catastrophe."

Aubrey looked at the pictures with eyes that at first could only see the ghastly, horrified, living countenance behind him.

The Baron Valentin had followed them with steps that seemed urged by other volition than his own, with a dazed look in his eye, as of one whose whole heart recoiled from the sight, and was yet fascinated by some potent spell to seek and endure it.

That remorseless hand of Von Schubert still held away the sombre veil and showed the pictures fresh and bright as when first given from the artist's brush.

His coldly glittering eye searched over the baron's convulsed face.

Who was the man? What mysterious power had he to stand thus in the presence of the master of that grand old place, and torture him as so evidently he was doing?

Aubrey Dalberg asked this mentally again and again, before this strange visit to the picture gallery was ended.

The canvas showed the face of a young and spirited man, handsome, with, Aubrey instantly detected, a likeness to Count Roderich and to the Baron Valentin himself—a fiery-spirited man, if the brilliant flash of the eye, the haughty curl of the thin lip, meant anything.

The Baron Valentin gave one hoarse groan, and a singular blending of anger, remorse and horror looked forth from his quivering features.

But the next instant it was all swept away by a stronger passion as his eyes darted to the lady's portrait and seemed to cling there with mingled adoration and anguish.

A wonderful face it was. No wonder the artist had produced such a beautiful gem of art, if there had been a living model before him.

It was a woman, royally beautiful, with a sweet, angelic gentleness of expression blending with the high-bred grace that was indescribably charming—a face to drive passionate men into wild deeds. Those wonderful magnetic eyes would take a hold no after experience could efface.

This stern baron, it was plain, had been under the spell of their witchery. Even now he forgot the spectators, the circumstances, the time and place, and stood spell-bound, gazing, gazing—all his soul in his look, the colour slowly creeping into his pale cheek, the old fire kindling in his eyes.

"Lady Pauline!" he murmured, in a low, passionate tone.

Herr Von Schubert's eyes never lost a single change of expression.

He smiled a low, dark smile that made Aubrey shrink, and the latter advanced between them hastily from a vague prompting, and spoke:

"Baron Baer."

The baron started, turned, looked from one to the other in a strange, blind stare, then put his hand to his head and staggered out of the gallery.

But outside they heard a heavy fall.

Rushing forth, they saw two servants lifting up the senseless figure of their master and bearing it away toward his private suite of rooms.

Aubrey was about to follow, but his companion laid a constraining hand on his shoulder.

"You had best leave him to recover alone, my friend. The man has a heart, it seems, a fact I had begun to doubt. He has not visited this gallery since the last baron died. No wonder the memories which arose to confront him were overwhelming."

"I must go and attend to him. He must be very ill," returned Aubrey, impatiently, trying to shake off the detaining hand.

"You will do well to leave that man alone, my generous young friend; not only now, but in the future. His friendship is dangerous, his service fatal. Do not say I have not warned you," continued Von Schubert, coolly.

"I do not understand a word you have said," cried Aubrey, indignantly.

"Unsophisticated youth! have you no idea either why you are here, the especial pet of father and son?" continued the other, with a satirical smile.

"I came because Count Roderich was good enough to invite me to visit this charming spot; and he asked me because he knew of my ardent admiration of picturesque scenery like this," was Aubrey's indignant return.

"Are you really ignorant of their plot, or have you attained such successful acting at your youthful age?"

Aubrey's indignation merged into wrath. He turned and walked swiftly away without deigning a glance behind him.

(To be continued.)

**ARMY FINES AND REWARDS.**—Commanding officers of regiments have had notified to them how the apportionment of the fund accumulated by fines inflicted for drunkenness in the army, in lieu of other punishment, the last two or three years, is to be made. It is as follows: Every soldier below the rank of corporal who shall be discharged at the end of his first period of service will receive 10s. gratuity for every good-conduct badge in his possession; or if discharged at the end of his second period of service a

gratuity of 1l. for every such badge; the sum of 3l. must not, however, be exceeded unless the soldier has no record of drunkenness against him for ten years, when the amount may be raised to 5l. if he has five badges. The rules will apply to men leaving the army to join the reserve or auxiliary forces, and the money will not have to be refunded if such men should hereafter rejoin the colours.

## LORD DANE'S ERROR.

### CHAPTER XL.

SYBIL let Baron Chandos lead her to a seat. She sat clasping and unclasping her hands nervously, while he waited, watching her with an intense and eager glance.

"You think, and my husband thought, that I did not love him," she said; "you were both mistaken. But never mind that now. That night before we left Leuseleigh I saw my husband get the note which my father must have sent him. I had run after him when he left me, to ask him something about our leaving in the morning, as we intended then. He did not hear me on the carpet; but I heard him caution the servant not to tell me he had received the letter. That made me angry. I went back without speaking to him. I am of a jealous temper, and I concluded at once that any letter which he concealed from me must be from a woman, some woman he had loved before he ever saw me. If he thought I married him for his title and wealth I thought he wedded me from compulsion."

"You know I supposed him to be Lord Dane then, and papa had a secret concerning Lord Dane on account of which I thought he married me. Well, I was jealous that it was some woman the letter came from, and I went back to my room and cried about it. I did not see him till dinner, and then he was so gay, and made such a clumsy excuse about having to leave me to go to Leuseleigh village about some business, that I resolved to watch him. When he went out I waited to see which way he went, and it was not toward Leuseleigh village, but into the park. I ran to my room then and changed my silk dress for another that was dark and would not rustle. Then I stole out in the direction I had seen my husband going. The park was gloomy, and it grew dark fast. I fell over a tree that was down and got out of the path, and finally lost all trace of where I was or even in which direction the Hall was."

"I grew very impatient and angry. I expected my husband would get back first and miss me, and how I should account for being in such a predicament I did not know. I was beginning to think I should have to stay where I was all night when I found myself in an open space among the trees. In the centre of this space was a small house, covered with vines. The sight of this house startled me very much. It was long and low, and, being covered with green vines, and having a tall chimney at one end, it made me think somehow of a huge grass-covered grave with its headstone. It looked like it indeed. The sight of it made me chilly. I believe now it was a warning to me of what it held. If I had but understood it, if I had but known what was inside there—but how should I guess? I did not dare go near it even. I kept in the shadow of the trees, looking at it in a sort of fright. Then it was I saw—I saw—"

Sybil paused and put her hand to her throat as once before, in a sort of hysteric agitation.

Baron Chandos leaned forward and took the other hand in his, chafing it gently.

Sybil gasped a little, controlled herself, and went on.

"I saw my husband come out of the bushes on the opposite side, and enter the house."

"Alone?" interposed Baron Chandos.

"Alone. Then I thought I heard voices, and my excitement getting the better of my fear, I crept forward. Before I could get to the wall—before I had taken half a dozen steps—I heard some one call out, inside the house—'Heath, you villain!'"

Sybil paused again, once more conquered her agitation, and went on.

"It was—it must have been my father's voice, but I did not recognize it, probably because he was very much excited, and spoke in an unnatural tone in his excitement. Not another sound did I hear—not a movement—not a breath. I listened with all my might, wondering if that could have been my father's voice, and who it was he called 'Heath.' I tried to go forward. I was not conscious of being afraid, except of being seen from the windows; but I seemed rooted to the spot. The strange silence crept over me with a sort of horror, easy enough to understand now."

Sybil paused again. She drew a long, quivering sigh, and leaned her head upon the back of the sofa on which she sat, as if unable to go on.

Baron Chandos waited patiently, chafing her hands in silence. His eyes gleamed, but his face was immovable.

Sybil raised her head again at last. She took up her retical where she had left it.

"I tried to speak—to call to my husband—but I could not utter a sound. A noise like the opening and shutting of a door, as nearly as I could recall the sound afterward, suddenly broke the spell that seemed on me. I turned and fled, stricken with fright. By the merest chance—for I had never been in this portion of the park before—I struck into a path leading to the Hall. I reached it. I managed to get to my own apartments without being seen by any one but my own maid, whom I silenced with a bribe."

Sybil stopped and looked at Baron Chandos. "Shall I go on?" she asked. "That is all of importance."

"Please go on, Lady Sybil. Did you see your husband that night?"

"Yes. He came in almost immediately after I had changed my torn and dragged clothes for fresh ones."

"How did he seem? Was he more than usually agitated? Did he seem furious?"

Sybil shook her head.

"Not excited—not at all," she said, "but very sad, and very still; so much so that I forgot all my anger and suspicion, and went of my own accord and sat beside him, and told him that I was sorry about a little disagreement we had had before dinner. His looks brightened all in a flash as it were. He put his arm around me and kissed me many times. How could he, baron, if he had just—if—"

Sybil looked at Chandos piteously. She was trembling again. The calling up these sweet recollections now, for that they had been sweet to her could not be doubted, the calling them up now was almost too much for her in her present state of mind.

"He could not," Baron Chandos said, kindly, yet with emphasis. "Dear lady, in spite of all, if I live I will prove your husband's innocence of that to you, to all the world!"

Sybil's beautiful eyes dilated, then she slowly and sadly shook her head.

"Wait," said the baron; "let me ask you a few questions. What kind of a night was it? Bright?"

"Yes, very."

"Full moon, was it not?"

"Yes."

"Were there no clouds? Could you see your husband distinctly—distinctly enough to be able to swear that it was he?"

Sybil reflected for a moment.

"I could not swear it, for I did not absolutely see his face—I was not near enough, and his hat shaded it, too. But I knew the figure; I could not be mistaken in it. Besides, who else could it have been?"

"That is precisely what we have to find out. You say you could not swear it was your husband, and you did not recognize your father's voice. You even thought at the time that the words you heard were uttered by your husband."

"Yes; until I heard that he was accused of the murder, until I knew that it was papa he went to meet that night, and that his own true name was Heath, I supposed it was he whom I heard speak."

"You were as certain of it, were you not, as you are certain now that it was he you saw enter that house?"

Sybil pondered for a moment.

"Yes," she said, slowly, "I was."

"You were, doubtless, mistaken in the one judgment. Might you not be in the other?"

Sybil thought again.

"No," she said. "The eye is more to be depended on than the ear."

The baron smiled.

"Scarcely. Your eyes were looking for your husband, your ears were listening for his voice, and the one saw and the other heard what was not there."

"You forget that the voice I heard addressed him by his true name. 'Heath, you villain!' it said."

"Yes, whoever struck that wicked blow gave it from behind, as was distinctly proved at the inquest. Your father never saw who struck him. Heath had left him there. When he felt himself struck he naturally called Heath's name first, and doubtless died supposing Heath was the assassin. He knows better now. Wait; answer me again, and think before you reply, for as surely as you are able to remember accurately I will prove to you that your husband never harmed your father. Did you observe the time—do you know what time it was when you got back to the house?"

Sybil started. She sat erect and excited.

"Yes, I do. The clock in my dressing-room was striking the half-hour as I entered it. I asked Adèle what time it was, for I was too tired to take another step, and the clock stood in an angle of the

wall, so that I could not see it from the seat into which I had thrown myself. Adèle said it was half-past nine. I could not believe it was so late, and I looked at my watch. It was even later by that some minutes."

"Could you have been half an hour in reaching the house when you ran in your fright?"

"I think not."

"Could you possibly have been an hour?"

"No—certainly not."

"You are sure?"

"I am positive."

"Precisely. Now listen to me. The surgeon who dressed your husband's shoulder that night swore before a magistrate that it was not later than half-past eight o'clock when he performed that operation. If that is true, if you are correct in your belief that it was half-past nine when you reached your own apartments, and are positive, as you say, that you could not have been an hour on the way, do you not see what follows? The man you saw enter the house in which your father undoubtedly was at that time—that man, who has undoubtedly murdered him, coming upon him from behind, and unexpectedly—could not have been your husband. Are you satisfied of that now?"

Sybil did not answer at once. She looked frightened and bewildered.

"Do you understand me?" the baron asked, kindly.

"I believe so—I believe I do; wait—let me think. Where is this surgeon?"

"At the village."

"Did my husband go there for him to dress his wounds?"

"No; the surgeon chanced to be at the Hall."

"Then, baron, I—I am not satisfied that it was not my husband I saw enter my father's prison-house that night. He might have had his wound dressed and gone back. There was time enough."

Baron Chandos frowned slightly.

"His time can all be accounted for after that. There is another who can swear that he was in the Hall from the time his wound was dressed till a quarter to ten. Are you satisfied now?"

Sybil shook her head.

"There is some mistake, baron. My maid may have told me wrong about the time. She might have looked carelessly. It is much more likely than that any one else could have had the interest he had in procuring my father's death."

Baron Chandos's face underwent a singular change while Sybil was speaking. He dropped her hand, he rose from his chair. He addressed her when she paused in a voice so bitterly contemptuous, so stinging with indignant sarcasm, that it brought a fleeting blush even into her cold, death-white cheek.

"Pardon me," he said, "for taking up your time with so unworthy a subject as the establishing your husband's innocence of a horrible crime. It is not natural, perhaps, that a wife should be convinced so easily as a stranger like myself."

Sybil had risen also, supporting herself with one hand upon the corner of the sofa. She heard him without anger. There was no resentment in her beautiful, white face.

"I said I should not permit you to speak in this manner to me, baron," she said, in a strange voice. "But I do permit it, because, much as you may throw contempt on the assertion, I did love my husband. I did not love him for the title I thought his, or for the grandeur he could give me, I did not love him because I thought he was a good or a great man, or because I believed him incapable of a falsehood or a mean action; I loved him, baron, because—"

"She paused, and looked at him with quivering lips and an awful agony darkening her lovely eyes—"it is a woman's reason—because I could not help it. I cannot help it now; I cannot, though I would die to do it, I cannot unlove him because of the guilt I believe to be on his soul, I cannot hate him now when I know him to be what he is."

She paused for a moment to steady her voice, and went on:

"I believe you to be a true friend to both of us—to me as well as him. I wish you to understand me if you can. Can a mother ever hate her children, however unworthy they prove? Are they not a part of her—her very own flesh and blood? Even so with him and me. You may doubt it in the face of my refusal to believe in his innocence of my father's death, in the face of my refusal to forgive him in Normandy. But we can none of us help our natures. I loved my father, too. I loved him long before I ever saw my husband. I was the only creature he had to love for years and years, and, whatever else I might be able to forgive, I cannot forgive his murderer. I cannot entertain any thought of forgiveness for the man who is suspected of his death. If my husband had never deceived me, if he had been, as I fondly imagined, one whose bare word was more than another's solemn oath, I might have believed his assertion of his innocence of this, though it contradicted

convictions as well supported as mine now are of his guilt. But he is not such a man. Can you honestly wonder, in the face of such long, such persistent, such artful and deliberate deceit as he displayed to me—can you honestly wonder, I say, that I dare not believe him? The wonder to me is that he can expect me to believe in him. I beg of you, Baron Chandos, not to answer me. I have only a few words more to say. You tell me you will prove his innocence. You can never prove it to me, except by proving another guilty of the deed. If you could prove that to me—if you could—"

She covered her face suddenly with her hands, dropped them again, and looked at him, saying, passionately:

"I would crawl in the dust to kiss your feet in thankfulness."

Her voice broke in sobs. She sank down upon the floor, shaking from head to foot with agitation, and crying aloud as Baron Chandos had never heard man or woman cry before.

A sudden convulsion passed over his face. His black eyes were flashing. He bent and lifted her by main strength.

"Lady Sybil," he said, almost fiercely, "will you forgive him the rest if I prove him innocent of that? If I find you the man who killed your father, and it is not your husband, will you forgive him everything else?"

Sybil caught her breath sharply.

"I told you, baron, that I loved him. Could I refuse to forgive him anything but this? If he had told me the truth when my father came to Leuseleigh to see him, if he had but let my father come to me with the whole story—why did he not? oh, why did he not?"

Baron Chandos echoed the question in his own heart:

"Why did he not?"

How much trouble might have been saved? Angry his wife would have been no doubt—unforgiving too for a while, but women rarely hold out in such unforgettingness.

Besides, Baron Chandos felt nearly certain that in the course of the excitement and explanations that must have ensued the truth contained in those papers which Vassar held would have come out. Not only would Volney have come into his rights then with little trouble, but Vassar, finding how the case really stood, would have thrown his influence in with Volney's to make all smooth again between him and Sybil.

Why did he not?

Because they who do evil travel always a downward road, and travel it the faster the longer they are on it, till unable to turn back they generally break their necks at last.

The wrong road is a very slippery one, as all find who once start on it, as difficult of ascent as it is easy of descent.

Volney Heath had found it so. Every time he looked back the way he had come it appeared harder than before to retrace his steps, and it was literally impossible to stop where he was.

Baron Chandos took his leave at peace with Sybil, blaming her still, but not so much as he had.

He went away without saying anything to her about the money—the thirty thousand pounds.

He felt that she would refuse it if he presented it directly, telling her whom it came from.

He arranged with her to act as her agent in business matters, hinting that he had got a clue to some old debts due to her father.

He calculated on conveying the money to her by means of some such fiction.

Among his last words to her were these:

"You assume, Lady Sybil, that your husband is alive. I hope he may be, but I assure you solemnly that I do not believe you and he will ever meet again in this world."

"Shall I tell you why I assume it, baron? I have become a keen observer within a few weeks. I noticed from almost the beginning of our conversation to-day that while you told me I should never see him again you did not once say in so many words, 'he is dead.' Neither did you express yourself in any language that would not bear the construction that he was alive to your knowledge."

Baron Chandos looked absolutely frightened as Sybil uttered these strange words. His face turned of a chalky hue, he looked unutterably flurried and discomposed, and, strangely enough, this odd fright of the baron's infected Sybil also.

Baron Chandos looked up and caught the expression of her face.

He extended his hand hurriedly.

"Good-afternoon, Lady Sybil," he said, huskily. "I shall miss my train if I do not hasten."

Sybil took his hand. She clung to it.

"There is something you have not told me," she cried. "I see it in your face. You know something you have not told me. I insist upon hearing it now."

"By what right do you insist, Lady Sybil?" he said, sternly; "by none that I shall recognize, rest

assured. I neither acknowledge nor deny that I know more than I have told you. Good-afternoon."

He almost wrenched his hand from her rigid clasp, and quitted the room without looking behind him.

(To be continued.)

## THE LILY OF CONNAUGHT.

### CHAPTER VIII.

Mightier far  
Than the strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway  
Of magic potent over sun and star,  
Is love, though oft to agony distressed.  
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's  
breast.

AFTER this unexpected interruption the entertainment palled, for every mind was too busy trying to fathom the mysterious occurrence to give much thought to pleasure.

A cloud hung over the whole royal party; and the Princess Eva, after having graced the first dance as the partner of Bruce, retired under plea of indisposition.

Blackness lowered upon the brow of the king, and the Princes Brazil and Desmond were stern and silent.

At a sign from the master of festivities the harpers and choristers burst forth in full chant. But the attentive rapture that the skill of the bard Malachi was wont to call forth from the chiefs and retainers was now wanting.

A signless, voiceless communication like that which precedes the re-entrance into court of a jury had gone forth throughout the assembly. This was the startling knowledge that the Knight of the Falcon loved the Princess Eva—and was beloved again.

The music was disregarded, and many an inquiring and furtive glance was cast towards a person seated close to the royal party.

He was a warrior of large and powerful frame. His herculean shoulders were surmounted by a very large head, with a great mass of bright, golden-red hair, and a beard of the same hue—a face with something of rugged grandeur, and eyes that gleamed like lanceheads in the sun.

Instead of the usual saffron tunic his dress was black, thrown open at the neck, and relieved by a crimson scarf that crossed his breast and by his baldric of polished steel.

This was Roderick O'Donnell, called Rory Roadh, or Red Roderick.

He was a warrior of note and tanist of Tyrowen—that is, he was prince-elect of that country, for according to the old system of tanistry the successor of a ruler was chosen during his lifetime.

Roderick was a firm ally of the O'Connors, and had long spent his warlike breath in sighs for the love of the Princess Eva, but, though her father and brothers approved his suit, the gallant Rory found no favour in the eyes of the royal maiden.

Still it was a foregone conclusion that sooner or later there would be an alliance between them, for in those days such things were arranged by the parental will alone—the wishes of the father were paramount, and son and daughter obeyed the dictates of filial duty rather than those of their own hearts.

This was the reason why so many looks were bent in the direction of Red Roderick, and this was the reason that he chafed under the scrutiny that he could not help but feel.

He sat, endeavouring with great effort to hide his feelings, biting the ends of his moustache, and playing viciously with the ornamented hilt of his dagger; but it was a volcano kept in check by a frail crust of snow, and suddenly in the very midst of one of the grandest bursts of music he sprang to his feet with flushed cheek, and addressed the king.

The words were unheard by the audience in the swell of the chorus, but they reached the ear of the king, for he started and gazed at Red Roderick with an expression in which surprise and displeasure blended, but the next moment he bent his head with a haughty motion of assent.

The tall warrior bent low over the royal hand extended to him, and, bowing to Brazil and Desmond, strode majestically from the presence.

The astonishment and conjectures aroused by this incident were cut short by the abrupt ceasing of the chant and the sound of the retiring march, that told of the close of the feast.

Some of the guests retired to their apartments, others to their tents among the troops, others strolled upon the ramparts to view the night, or out into the plain to see the rough, hearty enjoyment of the soldiery.

Among these latter were Bruce and his squire Malise, and they were joined beyond the barbacan by Prince Desmond, with an apology for the ill-fate of their festival and the apparent neglect of their Scottish guest.

The moon was rising slowly, like a great brazen shield, above the forests, and casting her mellow,

mournful rays athwart the roystering camping-grounds as the four, for Desmond O'Connor was attended by a page, strayed out among the smoking torches.

We will leave them to pursue their way to one of those strange meeting-points which fate prepares for good or evil, while we ascend the palace staircase and visit the apartment of the Princess Eva.

Passing through a small ante-chamber, lighted by a suspended brassy cresset, we open a heavy door of communication and view a scene of beauty beyond.

It is an apartment not spacious but appearing to be so from the far-stretching perspective of the rich tapestries that adorn the walls. Some of these are very ancient, while others are bright in the gleam of recent creation, having been wrought by the beautiful hands of Eva O'Connor herself.

A large gilt harp stood at the bedside, and a clarsheoch, or smaller instrument of the harp-kind, lay upon a table at the open window, with the first rays of the rising moon glinting off its inlaid pearl.

In the transverse wall, beyond the head of the bed, was a small niche or shrine, with crimson velvet curtains and a light, graceful canopy, carved of Irish wood. Within, lighted by three wax candles in a candelabra of copper-gilt, was a figure of the Virgin in silver and gold. Here knelt the Princess Eva O'Connor, with clasped hands and eyes upraised to the image of the saint.

So deeply was she absorbed in her devotions that she heard not a light, repeated rapping on the panel, and saw not the door swing open or the figure that passed in the doorway.

The intruder was dressed in the garb of a maid of honour, and advanced on tip-toe, gazing at the bed and around the room. As soon as she caught sight of the princess she stood still, doubtful whether to stay or retreat.

"*Ave Maria! Queen of Heaven and mother of Eternal Love!*" murmured the princess, "guide and protect thy child!"

As she spoke a large tear fell from her upturned face, and a sob came upon the ear of the visitor. She stood as if frightened by the sound, and retreated noiselessly towards the door. She was about closing it behind her when a gust of night wind swept through the ivy vines in the open casement, sighed mournfully across the clarsheoch and flickered the lights in the chamber.

Eva O'Connor started up in affright, for the Eolian tones of the instrument fell on her preoccupied ears like the sound of human agony or a ghostly moan. Her face assumed a marble paleness, and she gave an involuntary cry.

"My mistress, my dear lady!" exclaimed the girl, springing towards her to save her from falling.

"Theresa—*you?*"

"*Tis I, my lady! Pardon me.*"

"Pardon? for what?" said Eva, absently, gazing toward the window with the same frightened expression on her face.

"For your affright, my lady. I thought you were asleep—I felt reproach—"

"No—no!" said Eva, laying her hand upon the girl's shoulder. "It was not that, Theresa. What meant—whence came that sound?"

"'Twas but the night breeze rustling the ivy and moaning on the strings of the clarsheoch," said Theresa, pointing to the instrument lying flat upon the table.

The princess looked towards the harp. The fluttering ivy leaves were reflected in the moonlight upon the pearl ornamentation of its frame, and gave the appearance of something heaving and flashing with life; at the same time the soft breeze again called forth the wild ode from its strings.

"Strange," said the princess, leaning towards it, gazing and listening like one fascinated. "Tis strange—strange, Theresa. 'Tis his—his harp!"

"My lady, who?"

"Hush! girl, hush!" said the princess, in a frightened manner, putting her white, trembling hand over Theresa's lips, but still keeping her eyes on the harp. "The stones of Castle Connor are ungrateful, treacherous, his name must not be whispered to them. But you, Theresa, you are true. Listen! 'Tis Connocht Moran's—'tis the Falcon's. Look! Can you not see the living sparkle of his glance? Hark! That mournful music! 'Tis not the night wind. 'Tis his voice—but it comes from the hollow chambers of the dead!"

"My lady, my dear lady!" exclaimed the frightened girl, starting back to gaze in the glistening eyes of her mistress. "Why speak you so? Come, calm yourself; you are ill—you are excited! Let me beg you to get to rest."

"No, no, Theresa; do not bend your eyes in such affright upon me. I do not rave; these are no dreamings. I am not mad! Why did my heart fail me and an unmanly shriek occupy my lips to see the knight Moran fall from his steed?"

She paused, and her simple-hearted companion thought she awaited an answer.

"'Twas your interest, lady," she said, "your friendship—your love."

No sooner had the girl spoken the last word than she was covered with blushing confusion at her own boldness.

This was increased by the princess suddenly turning her bright eyes upon her.

"Love!" she cried. "No—yes! Could it have been a fantasy of love? I thank you for the word, Theresa; but listen, I saw—plainly saw in this air above his head—a vision of my brothers with swords striking him to the earth."

"Sainted Mother!" exclaimed the girl, frightened by her vehement manner. "These are imaginations of the Evil One!"

The princess did not heed her, but, gazing on vacancy with a horrid expression of realization, seemed to address the air in wild questioning.

"Why did my soul die within me and the power of speech desert me at the banquet? Because the place of the Falcon Knight was filled by a fleshless skeleton! Because in the empty seat of Conrad I saw the red-robed form of the executioner, and Red Roderick looked like the fire-fiend laughing at my terror."

"Heaven preserve us!" devoutly ejaculated the girl, Theresa. "Her wit have left her."

Again the ivy leaves gave forth a sound like the rustling of wings, and the wind swept over the strings of the clarsheoch with a wild, mournful rise and fall like a wail for the dead.

"Oh!" sobbed Eva O'Connor, burying her face in the bosom of her companion, "it is the voice of fate! It whispers me: 'This night the Falcon warrior dies, and by thy brother's hand!' Oh, Heaven! Perhaps even now he gasps beneath the blow. That wail sounds like a dying moan. 'Tis his. Oh, fatal light, lead me to where he lies!"

She burst from the trembling hold of Theresa, and rushed forward with outstretched arms, as if striving to grasp something fleeing before her, but suddenly her overtaken strength failed—she reeled, and, with an inarticulate cry, fell backward on the bed and lay motionless upon the yellow coverlet like a broken lily on a sunlit stream.

"Ah, Heaven be good to us!" exclaimed Theresa, rushing towards her. "Lady Eva, my dear mistress! What imaginations are here! Awake! Arouse thee! Let me see thine eyes. 'Tis but the wind! See! I will move the harp, and it will cease!"

The girl removed the instrument—hastened back to the couch and raised the golden head tenderly.

"Poor, pale mistress," she said, affectionately. "Open your blue eyes to her that loves you. Listen! the sound has ceased. Be not afraid—'twas not the coins, or the cry of the banishes, but the sporting wind from the mountains playing across the battlements. What, not a word for your Theresa? Speak to me, my princess—my Eva!" she cried, patting the white cheek, and then, receiving no answer, with a cry of fear she pressed her ear to the satin bodice and heard the muffled throbbing of the heart.

"Praise Heaven, she lives! she sleeps. 'Tis best; I will not wake her," said Theresa, straightening the inanimate form upon the bed, and raising the head with the pillows. "Sleep, poor mistress; forget your fancies."

She pressed her lips upon the pale forehead, and, drawing a seat noiselessly beneath the two pendant lamps, blew out their light, leaving the room illumined only by the tapers of the little sanctuary, and the moonlight struggling through the ivy that partially veiled the casement.

Returning toward the couch, Theresa stood still, struck by the beauty of the sight.

The quenching of the lamps had given the moonlight a new way. The mellow beams shone off the frame of the gilded harp in phosphorescent lines—they fell icily on the lovely form upon the pillows, and turned the tent-like curtains into a pyramid of snow.

The couch looked like a sculptured tomb, on which lay the death-cold form of Music, with her silver harp beside her; or like a white tent on the celestial plains with a seraph at repose.

"Poor mistress," said Theresa, mournfully. "Thou art very beautiful—but, alas, ill-mated love's unlovely to the world!"

#### CHAPTER IX.

We'll be true to each other, though Fate has now parted.

Two spirits that yearn with devotion and love; We will show the hard world that we both are strong-hearted.

And the wings of the eagle shall nestle our dove.

ELIZA COOK.

Theresa had just seated herself to watch beside her mistress when low notes of music stole up through the vines above the far hum of camp sounds.

At first it was a mere tinkling, but, rising gradually into a wildly beautiful air, it trembled in and seemed to hang lovingly, enchantingly around the snowy canopy of the bed.

The Princess Eva moved restlessly, and murmured in plaintive, incoherent tones through her sleep—then suddenly started up with glistening eyes and enraptured look, bending eagerly toward the sounds. Springing from the couch, she hastened to the window and pushed aside the vines to listen.

It was difficult to localize the sound, it floated so weirdly on the air, but Eva O'Connor saw upon the battlements before and above her casement a figure clearly defined against the sky; the moonlight giving a red tinge to one edge of the outline.

"'Tis Conrad!" she said. "But hark, Theresa! you'll hear the voice that calls me."

"Calls thee, my mistress?"

"Calls me. Hark!"

From below, stealing hollowly and sweetly up, like the sigh of the night-wind through the noodies of the mountain pines, rose a voice accompanying the music:

"On the side of Cona's mountain,  
Hidden deep in rocky cava,  
Darkling springs the mystic fountain,  
That supplies the fateful wave,  
From the hearts of hills eternal,  
Where the friendly spirits dwell,  
Messengers of truths supernatural,  
Lo, it seeks the Fairy Well.  
Haste thee, haste, the happy ransome,  
Passeth with the midnight bell,  
Wisdom waits thee—wouldst thou  
win it—  
Haste thee to the Fairy Well."

"Warrior, lovely maid or princess,  
Both the future trouble thee?  
Seek the fountain that erases  
What that future's love shall be.  
Do the glooms of doubt distress thee?  
Do the pangs of passion wall?  
Haste and truth with peace shall bless thee  
At the fairy's mystic well.  
Haste thee, haste, the spirits call thee,  
Come, ere stroke of midnight bell,  
Naught of evil shall befall thee  
At the fairy's haunted well."

As the voice ceased Eva O'Connor turned excitedly toward her attendant.

"Quick! Theresa, quick!" she cried, with impatient movement. "The clarsheoch, quick! I must answer. I am called. I will obey."

She seized the instrument handed to her by the astonished girl, and struck a wild reproduction of the invitation air, that rippled along the gray battlements and floated away into the night, causing the sentinel to pause upon his beat and the boisterous soldier to cease his rivalry to listen.

"There!" she cried as she paused and heard the faint-growing sounds of the mysterious harp dying away like fairy bells. "There, the die is cast. I will pierce this cloud and know my fate—and his. My cannabha, quick, Theresa, and thine own filled—  
—the plainest—my alma-cloak—so we may pass unknown. They will take us for two cottage maidens searching the battle ground for dead lovers. Haste, we must away!"

"Whither, good thou, mistress?"

"To the Fairy Well. To pluck the last green branch from the blighted oak and strike foreknowledge from the fateful waters."

"Ah, Heaven, princess!" exclaimed Theresa, in affright, dropping the dark-hooded cannabha, or cloak, which she had brought from a recess. "Say not so. You will not surely tempt the glen at such an hour? Think of the danger—"

"Hush, child, and hold the cloak."

"Think of the stories they relate, my lady. 'Twas but this night, in the refectory, the sennachie told many tales of wells and fairy charms—as how Queen Boan disobeyed the king, and with her hound Daballa, stole at night to unveil the mystery of the royal spring; how the charm broke, the spring arose and swept her, torn and blind, into the sea; and how hence came the stream called after her, the Boyne, and the Da Billiau Beck, to which her hound Daballa was transformed. He told how fair Killarney displaced the stone that shut the fountain's mouth and changed the fruitful vales into lakes—"

"Hush, child, you babble! Don your cloak and hasten, girl. Conrad has left the wall. 'Tis near to midnight. Come!"

Muffled in cloaks and hoods sufficiently close to hide the richness of their clothes, they left the room and glided out into the corridor. The trembling Theresa went first, in order to answer any questions that might be asked.

Passing yawning porters and servitors, whose duties kept them from joining in the revelry without, they descended the broad staircase, and, avoid of the main entrance, where a crowd of lounging pages and esquires were gazing at the groups of laughing men-at-arms in the courtyard, they hurried back

along the hall, turned into a dark passage, passed through a low-arched door, and stood in a deserted part of the outer enclosure.

They paused a moment in the shade to assure themselves that they were not watched. All was silent near them.

No human form was in sight save the distant sentinels on the walls above them.

Eva O'Connor flitted across the open space and under the shadow of the wall.

Theresa followed with more trepidation.

"My mistress!" she said as she joined the princess.

"Think what you do. Better turn back."

"Peace! I must go on!"

"Shall I seek Ronald or some of the pages to bear us company?"

"No. No one."

"Do you not fear to pass the camp alone at such an hour?"

"Girl," cried the princess, severely, "are not the soldiers Irishmen? Am not I the O'Connor's Child? Give me the postern key. I will go alone. You can return."

"No—no! Ah, princess, you are cruel!" cried the girl, in a choking voice, catching Eva's cloak and pressing it to her lips. "Heaven knows it is for you I fear, not for myself. Let us go, my mistress."

Theresa with trembling hands removed a bar, and unlocking a small postern door in the bawn or outer wall threw it open.

The vines before described as covering this defence hung low and matted over the aperture and swung backward and forward in the draught of night air that rushed through.

They listened for a moment to the confused murmur without, and Theresa held up the lady screen while the princess passed beneath.

She then followed, locking the postern and letting the trailers fall over it so as to completely hide it from view.

Between the base of the bawn and the dark masses of the moat ran a grassy bank or path around the entire fortification. This connected the main drawbridge and the smaller bridges of the sallyports, giving quick means of communication in time of siege, although it was too narrow to be of much advantage to any assailing parties who might succeed in crossing the moat.

The postern through which Eva O'Connor and her maid had just come was called the "Princess's Gate," from the fact that she alone bore the key of it and used it as a means of communication between the castle and her favourite haunts in the royal demesnes.

Before the door were a couple of stone steps forming a boat-stair.

"Whither, mistress?" said Theresa, after a pause.

"Around the path to the drawbridge?"

"No; the shallow, quickly, Theresa, quickly. They are occupied and will not see us."

The girl stooped on the stone steps, unhooked a chain that jingled slightly, and drew forth a small, light skiff from its concealment in a hollow of the bank.

Just then the rattle of arms and the challenge of rough voices were heard on the walls above them, and, thinking the jingle of the chain had attracted the attention of the sentinels, Theresa crouched low and silently upon the water-steps, and the princess drew close to the vine-covered wall.

The short, gruff sound of challenge and reply, and the whispered interchange of watchword and countersign, dropped down to the ears of the listeners.

"Tis well, Theresa," whispered the princess.

"Be still a moment; 'tis but the change of guard."

"Ha, Bernard," said the rough voice of a guardman above; "is it not provoking that a man of full blood should have to leave his merriment and hot punch to stand here pointing his pike at the moon like a gnome on a water-clock or a fool at a fair?"

"A pity of thee, Phadraic, and certain," said another, in bluff banter. "Thou who has been roaring thy pleasures all night like a bull-calf, and slinking thy clumsy feet to the danger of honest people's shins, thou didst not think that a pannikin of the usquebaugh ye were destroying would have cured the quills of us star watchers. Take thy turn now, and bless thee—the much good may it do thee."

"Nay but what's the use of guarding a castle wall when the whole plain is paved with guards? Faith I envy thee, Bernard; the sport is but beginning. Never was such a night of jollity since Cathal thrashed Fitz Adelm at the Hill of Oaks! By my faith, if the gentles and princes know not how to keep a merry-making without making mows at one another they should go a-camp and take lessons from the men of buff."

"Ha! what's that? It is the gathering sound to march!"

A bugle note swelled out long and loud, and im-

mediately, at a short distance, could be seen lights hurrying to and fro, and the clash of arms and the trampling of horses were heard.

"It is the troop of Rory Ruadh," said the man called Phadraic. "They are to get nearer to the mountains to be ready for the homeward march at daybreak."

"Why, Phadraic, go they so soon?"

"Oh, Red Rory's temper's not of carded wool. He was a heart hunter that came a pigeon-sneering, and he feels high dudgeon because a falcon struck the bird before he'd set his springs."

"Tut, man, you talk like a hallow-e'en riddle maker."

"Let's whisper, then, 'tis not to be spread abroad—O'Connor's Child has but one heart, and that's bespoken. That's why Red Rory turns his broad back on Castle Connor. He's not the infant to smile at disappointment. Lay up the words in your goodly bosom, and so good-night. Remember me when thou dost toss the horn—think of me who have no horn but the moon's to contemplate."

Both soldiers laughed, and then the footsteps of the one relieved died away, and all was silent on the walls, but the tumult of rally and preparation went on in the direction of Red Roderick's camp.

The princess paused for a moment and the girl was in hopes that she had given up her intention of visiting the mystic well, but she approached the boat with sudden resolution and took her seat.

"Row in the shadow, Theresa, beyond this fellow's sight," she said.

The girl took the light oars and rowed silently along under the shadow of the wall.

"So," murmured Eva, with her head bent mournfully upon her breast, "the name of O'Connor's Child has become a gossip-word for the boys upon the walls, and the affections of her heart are a speculation and a wonder. At last my long-kept secret is out. But why a secret? Oh, love! love! brightest of realities, why art thou scorned and bartered off for idle fancies? Why is the nobility of man measured by acres, not by virtue—by dross that rusts rather than by goodly deeds that challenge Heaven's approval?"

The girl had, unbidden, turned the boat's head across the water, and they were nearing the opposite bank when a resting in a small coppice that lay in the moonlight beyond startled them, and the fair rover rested upon her oars in a listening attitude.

Eva O'Connor strained both eye and ear in the direction, until hollow sounds seemed to murmur about her and the red bale-light reared in her imagination, and appeared to blaze amidst the dark trees.

Suddenly there was a shock as of two bodies meeting accidentally in the darkness, then loud exclamations, and the sounds of the drawing of arms.

There was no immediate clash of combat, but angry word and hot reply, and the heart of the princess sank as she thought she recognized both voices.

"Still it cannot be," she said. "Moran is ill and under guard, and Conrad was, but now, upon the wall."

Then the strange imaginativeness which was a portion of her nature took possession of her, and the horrid words seemed to be hissed in her ears:

"This night the Falcon warrior dies, and by thy brother's hand."

"I will not believe it," she said. "Let us get back, Theresa. I will assure myself they are within. This is some drunken brawl."

The girl willingly dipped her oars to turn the boat; but at the moment, as suddenly as actors enter in a theatre, two furious figures burst from the coppice and faced each other in the moonlight.

The princess cried aloud in fear and agony as she recognized the crimson mantle of Prince Conrad and the graceful form of Connocht Moran, and saw them stand one moment a-guard with gleaming blades.

It looked like the brilliant fancy of a dream; she could scarce believe it real until she heard the fiery voice of Conrad.

"Now, now, sir knight," he cried. "Here, before the insulted home of my fathers, while the insult is still fresh, is the time to wipe it out!"

"By Heaven, Conrad, you press me hard," said Moran, with lowered point.

"Hard!" exclaimed Conrad, with a fierce sneer—"to tax thee with thy presumption—thy treason—face to face, to measure swords, and make an equal of thee?"

"Treason!" cried Moran, angrily. "An equal! Insolent boy, what art thou better?"

"Thy master, low-born traitor!" cried the boy, savagely, throwing himself upon him, "Guard, or I cut thee down."

Forced by the very onslaught made, Moran threw himself into a defensive attitude, and the blue sparks flew from the weapons as they met.

"Haste, Theresa, haste!" shrieked Eva O'Connor

as the girl drove the skiff towards the shore with powerful strokes.

Scarcely had the prow touched the bank when the princess leaped on the green sward, and rushed toward the combatants, crying:

"Stay! Connocht! Conrad! stay!"

She threw herself recklessly between the flashing blades, and Moran, who had been acting on the defensive, dropped his point. But her presence seemed only to infuriate her brother, for he struck at his antagonist across her kneeling form, and then, with an imprecation, cast her aside, so that she fell prone upon the dewy grass, and she heard the wild shock of his renewed assault.

Her cheek was on the wet ground for an instant, and she heard or felt the tremendous throb of feet hurrying towards them, as hunters hear the approach of the distant herd.

She thanked Heaven that the clashing of the swords had called attention, and as she started up, crying aloud, several men burst through the trees, a couple of swords struck up the blades of the combatants, and Desmond O'Connor and Edward Bruce stood between them.

In the next instant they were joined by Prince Brazil and Red Roderick, with attendants men-at-arms.

"What, Conrad! Sir Connocht!" exclaimed Desmond, in loud, angry tones. "What means this brawl? Have your wits left you? Are ye drunk, that ye alarm the camp and make night wild, fighting like tapsters for a scullion? For shame! Are ye knights? Are ye gentlemen? Hence, woman! he cried, turning his eyes savagely upon the disguised form of the princess. "Get thee gone, or, by my soul, I'll have thee to the whipping-post!"

The princess suppressed a cry, and, wrapping her cloak about her, turned to flee.

Connocht Moran, with an angry imprecation, pushed aside the restraining hand of Bruce, and made one step towards Desmond, about to speak. But Conrad burst into a bitter, angry laugh.

"By my word, my brother!" he exclaimed, "thou art the very person wanted here—a proper doctor for this stubborn case—a leveller of rank—an equalizer of princess and peasant!"

"What mean these ranting words?"

"They mean that the scullion, the woman thou wouldst beat, is our sister Eva—O'Connor's Child!"

"Eva! Impossible!" exclaimed Desmond, starting towards her.

"The Princess Eva?"

"O'Connor's Child?" repeated all, in astonishment.

"O'Connor's Child!" said the princess, throwing back the disguising hood and allowing the moonlight to fall on her golden hair and snowy face.

"Eva, what do you here?" asked Brazil and Desmond, in a breath, their angry eyes turning from her to Connocht Moran.

"She keeps love tryst," cried the passionate Conrad, with an angry laugh that was a mockery of the sound of mirth.

The princess approached, and looked him steadily in the face with bright, rebuking eyes.

"Brother of mine!" she said, "thou art presumptuous. Thy childish temper misguides thee, and makes thee speak unworthily."

"Speak, then, thyself," said Brazil. "Why here, and in disguise?"

"My gentle brothers," she said, turning haughtily from one to the other, "I have yet to learn by what right you question the going or coming of O'Connor's Child upon her father's lands. My own good will is the reason I am here. That is my answer. This pettish boy has done me injury and wronged that gallant knight."

She drew herself up with queen-like dignity, and waved her jewelled hand to where Connocht Moran chafed beneath the friendly hold of Bruce. Her cutting words, instead of abasing young Conrad, only angered him the more, and he burst forth with fiery vehemence:

"Ho, for the gallant knight that works treason against the roof that reared him, that takes advantage of a family's fostering to make its name a bawdy-word and jest!"

"Silence! babbler!" cried Desmond, furiously, his dark cheek flushing crimson as his eyes fell upon the listening crowd.

"I will not be silent, brother, while I have tongue to speak. Shall the kestrel seek a mate in the eyrie of the eagle? Let this gallant knight search the Psalter of Tara for the records of our house and point his parallel. The Psalter knows him not, and shall the hand of the Child of the O'Connor be aspired to by such a base-born—"

He was interrupted by Moran, whose face was flushed and eyes were gleaming with the same wild frenzy he had shown at the banquet.

"Base-born in thy teeth!" he cried, endeavouring to rush upon him, but many hands held him back.



[THE PRINCESS'S GATE.]

"Gout, gadfly, baby-braggart," he gasped, "thou art not worthy of a soldier's anger!"

The infuriated Conrad, held by his brothers, and unable to get at the object of his anger, seized his velvet cap, and, with an imprecation, dashed it over Bruce's shoulder into Connocht Moran's face.

With a cry of rage the knight wrenched himself free and bounded on him like a panther, but one sweeping blow of Desmond's heavy sword struck the weapon from his hand, and, at a word from Brazil, the men-at-arms surrounded him.

"Conrad O'Connor and Sir Connocht Moran," said Desmond, in slow, stern tones, "as commandant of this camp and citadel, I forbid this quarrel under pain of the dungeon, and command you both to get into your quarters in the castle, whence you are absent against the king's wish."

Conrad took the cap handed to him by one of the soldiers, and, with a look of hatred and defiance at Moran, turned and strode away along the edge of the castle moat.

Connocht received the sword handed by Bruce and said, suppressing his excitement by a mighty effort:

"With all honour and friendship to thee, Prince Desmond, who have in the past been a noble friend and brother to me, I forego this quarrel, so sharply forced upon me, but farther I cannot obey thee," he cried, his forced calmness giving way in a burst of excitement. "To yonder walls I never shall return. I—the presumptuous base-born—the kestril, unfit to flock with eagles—claim a prince's right to withdraw from a court where faithful servitude is entitled treason and is repaid with insult. Farewell. The disinherited takes nothing with him but his father's stainless sword. He leaves the shield bruised in your battles hanging on your walls as a memorial of his wrongs."

He turned to go, and many a stern eye moistened and many a bearded lip quivered as the grim men-at-arms made way for him to pass, for the Falcon Knight was beloved by all the soldiers.

A look of stern sorrow settled on the dark face of Prince Desmond.

"Farewell, sir knight," he said, haughtily. "Thy pleasure be thy guide."

Brazil O'Connor sprang forward and seized his hand.

The two had been associates in command since they were deemed worthy to have the charge of forces.

"Good fortune tend thee, Connocht Moran!" cried the prince, warmly.

Moran wrung his hand in silence, for he was too much agitated to speak, and, pulling his cap upon his

brows, he turned hastily away, but, passing where Eva O'Connor stood, a low, gasped sigh caused him to raise his head, and he caught her sad, appealing gaze and saw a tear upon her pale cheek, glittering in the moonlight like a diamond.

"Honoured princess!" he exclaimed, kneeling at her feet and raising the hem of her rough cloak to his lips, "accept the last farewell of an humble knight who lived but in his duty to your highness and to his lord the king. To escape disgrace I fly the scenes where I have spent such happy hours, and grief goes with me. Farewell—an outcast cannot ask to be remembered."

She plucked the garment from his hold, and he looked up in surprise, taking it for the act of anger. Her face was flushed with a proud glow, and her eyes sparkled brilliantly; yet there was a deep tremor in her voice when she spoke.

With rapid fingers she undid the fastening of the cloak, and, taking a golden chain from her neck, she threw it over his.

"See, noble warriors!" she said, gazing proudly around. "Take note, my princely brothers, that, disinherited outcast as he is, O'Connor's Child bestows this pledge of true remembrance upon the flower of Erin's knighthood!"

A coarse laugh, like the rumble of thunder, interrupted her, and, looking up, she saw the massive face of Red Roderick convulsed with jealousy and anger.

Moran also started and caught the giant's gaze. He was about to spring up, but she stayed him by a touch of her hand.

At the same moment Rory Ruadh, wilting before the scorn that flashed in her eyes, gave another laugh and strode away with a muttered imprecation.

"Sir Connocht Moran!" continued the princess, "I cannot ask thee to stay. Rather—I beg thee to fly this place. 'Tis full of danger to thee. Go. Fortune and honour beam upon thee. To other scenes where envy does not dwell—to fields where honour waits on noble deeds—to courts where virtue is nobility—bear this memorial of O'Connor's Child!"

Pulling away the hand on which, despite his struggle, his tears were falling, she gathered her cloak around her, and, rushing to the bank, threw herself into the boat.

"Quick, quick, Theresa! Bear me away," she cried, her long-restrained tears bursting forth in torrents.

"Home?" asked the girl.

"No—on the water! Let me sigh life away anywhere—anywhere but within those dreadful walls!"

Connocht Moran, springing to his feet, hastened into the coppice, lest his emotion should be noted by the bystanders, but hardly had he gained the shadows when he felt a hand upon his shoulder and heard a friendly voice say:

"Nay, gentle knight, thou shalt not so desert thy friend though the acquaintance be but of a day." He recognized the voice of Bruce, and returned the warm grasp of his hand.

"My lord," he said, "I thank thee for thy kind remembrance of one so poor as I. I am much beholden to thee, and wish thee all happiness and a kind farewell; I am unfit for conversation."

"But art thou really bent on this departure?"

"I am, my lord. My fate is cast. 'Tis past a per-adventure."

"Why, then, body o' mine!" said the Scot, warmly, "I need good hearts and swords. Serve with me. 'Twill still be in thy country's cause. I'll give thee rank thine honour shall not blush to hold. Serve with me!"

"Oh, thanks, my lord!" cried Moran. "It is a boon I would have asked but for these lately spoken accusations."

"Hoot, man! think not of trifles. The gad-fly can but vex the war-horse—he cannot kill. Where shall we meet?"

"At your pleasure."

"I stop at Aughrim town on my return."

"There, my lord, I shall await thy coming."

"Till then be stout of heart. Farewell."

"Heaven be with thee, my lord."

The young knight plunged into the darkness of the wood, and Bruce, returning, joined the prince and their party.

The brothers were in earnest conversation.

"Enough, Brazil, enough!" said Desmond as Bruce approached. "I grieve that he is gone, but thinkst thou I would kneel to ask him stay?"

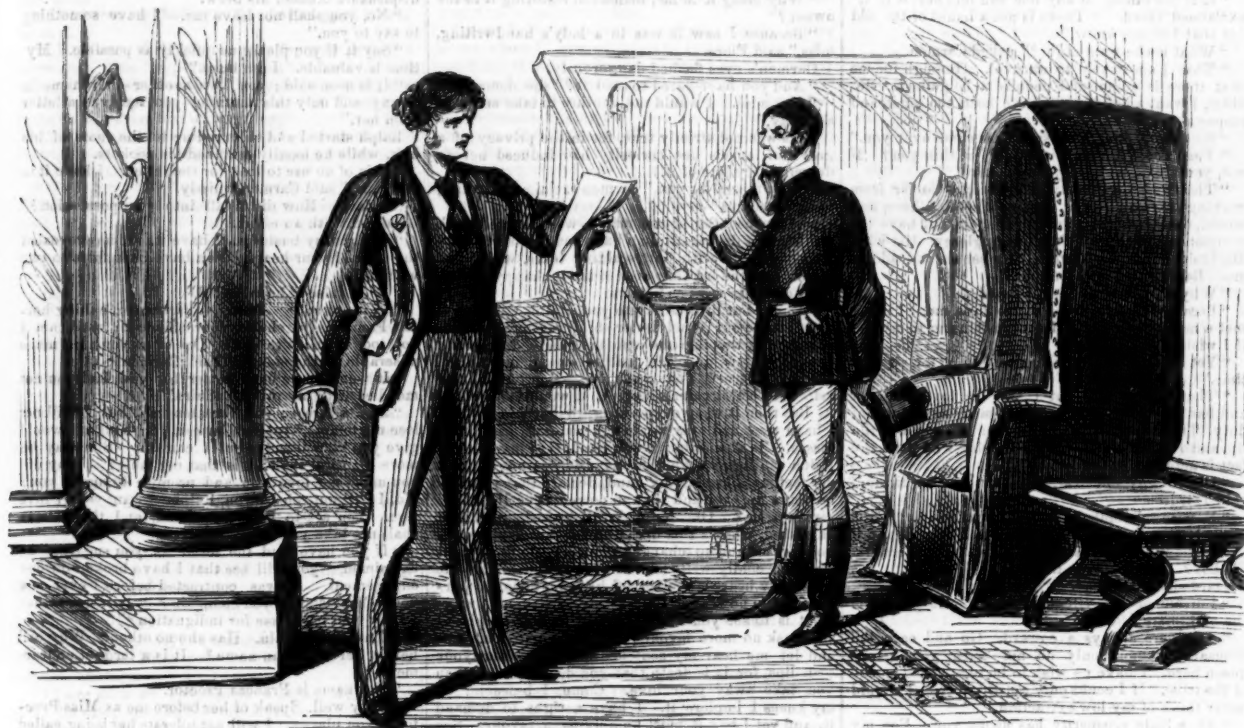
"But to start out defenceless and on foot," persisted Brazil.

"'Tis bad!" mused Desmond. "See that his esquire and lacqueys follow with his effects."

But, for all Desmond's sternness, his heart was troubled for the departure of his brother-in-arms, and the more so as the news of the quarrel had already spread in the camp, and the jollity of the soldiers was hushed in their sorrow for the self-banished favourite.

So much were the brothers moved that ere long, by mutual consent, they were riding hard in the direction taken by Moran in the hope of overtaking him and causing his return.

(To be continued.)



[BETWEEN TWO STOOLS.]

## MARIGOLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Image in the Heart," "Sweet Eglantine,"  
"The Three Passions," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XLIII.

Their merry chat was o'er,  
And yet they felt, they knew not why,  
More glad than they had done before. Alas.

For some days Lord Kimbolton lingered in a state of unconsciousness. The doctor pronounced his injuries to be of a very grave nature, and held out no hope of recovery.

Marigold seemed to forget that she had been formally divorced from him, and insisted that she was his wife. She waited upon him with the utmost assiduity, and would not allow herself to be removed from the room in which he was lying.

Captain Anglesey would willingly have employed the best medical talent in his behalf had it been necessary and engaged experienced nurses to attend upon him, but she insisted upon being always by his side, and Anglesey was persuaded that the local doctors could do as much for the injured man as the most celebrated physician in London.

An extraordinary change had taken place in Marigold. Her intellect, clouded for so many years, seemed to be changed by magic, and she was quite coherent in all her observations.

When she was informed that he would not live she inquired if he would ever recover sufficiently before his death to understand and reply to any observations that were put to him.

The doctors answered that it was extremely probable he would rally for a few hours before the final crisis arrived.

Nor were they mistaken.

It was on the morning of the fifth day after the railway accident that his lordship looked around him inquiringly, and feebly asked for water, which Marigold, as usual, gave him with her own hands.

The gray dawn was stealing in through the chinks of the windows, and the flame of the lamp assumed a feeble yellow.

It might have been between six and seven o'clock. The only watchers by the sick-bed were Marigold, a hired nurse, and Captain Anglesey.

"Do you not know me?" asked Marigold, in the sweet, low voice he had once loved to dwell upon. "I am your wife."

Lord Kimbolton looked curiously at her.

"You are Marigold," he replied, "my false wife—the wife I have cast from me. Why am I here?"

What has happened? Am I in the house of my enemy?"

"Yes," she answered, sadly. "You have cause to call him your enemy, but years have placed a wide gap between the present and the past. We have all suffered—I more than any one else. Heaven has dealt heavily with us."

"What has happened?" he repeated, in an irritable tone.

She told him how he had been injured in a railway accident near the spot where he was lying, and when it was all clear to him and he knew that he must die his face lighted up with a softened glow.

"Marigold," he said, "my once adored and worshipped Marigold, I have much to answer for. They told me you were mad, and I rejoiced."

"No, no, I have been dreaming all these years," she answered, "because you took my child away from me, but lately I have changed, I have awakened, and the dream is over. You will tell me where my child is, will you not? Oh, do, please tell me, or—or I shall go to sleep again and dream."

Her voice was so plaintive, and so full of expression that it would have moved a heart of stone.

"Yes," he said, "I will tell you all I know. I feel that I am on my death-bed, and I must make reparation—that is, what reparation is in my power. We have been persecuted by fate and I forgive you."

Marigold smoothed his scanty gray hair with her delicate, transparent fingers.

"You have not been happy," she replied. "No, no, you have had your sorrows."

"Like yourself, I have lost a child," Lord Kimbolton replied. "It was my pride to think that he would be my heir, that he would transmit my name to posterity; but he has been snatched from me."

"How?" she asked, under her breath.

"He was assassinated in Marseilles, they tell me, and there ends my line. Ours is a noble race. Our pride perhaps has ruined us."

"But you will give me back my child?" she urged.

"I can only afford you a slender clue. The child was at my instigation stolen from a cottage in the Clifton Woods, whither I had caused it to be conveyed."

"By whom?"

Captain Anglesey bent forward to listen to the reply.

It was some time before it came, as a rush of blood to the mouth caused him to cough violently and prevented further utterance.

"Gipsies stole her. I paid them handsomely to take her away and destroy every trace of her identity," he replied, faintly, when the fit was over.

"How can we trace her?"

"Find Rachel Lee, the gipsy queen. If she is living she will give you all the particulars and help you to find her."

"But if she is dead?" said Marigold.

"Then I can give you no hope. The secret is in her keeping."

He fell back exhausted, and another paroxysm so prostrated him that he rapidly sank again into a comatose state, from which he never rallied.

The morning was yet early when the once proud and haughty Lord Kimbolton breathed his last, his dying moments soothed by the woman he had persecuted, his eyes closed by her hands, and a prayer for Heaven's mercy on his soul breathed by her forgiving lips.

It was a touching scene, and Captain Anglesey turned away to hide his tears. He had no cause to love the dead man, but time subdues our passions, and he too was growing old and must soon face the terrors of the grave.

They buried the proud peer with pomp and ceremony, and a crowd of friends attended him to the family vault. Among the mourners were Marigold and Captain Anglesey.

Soon after this event Anglesey was again privately married to Marigold, and this time she had the satisfaction of knowing that she was really his wife.

A great change had come over her. It was more than a change—it was a revelation. Her mind was calm and clear. She had a distinct purpose in life. If she could find Rachel Lee, the queen of the gipsies, she would be on the track of her lost child.

Lord Kimbolton on his death-bed had told her so, and dying men speak the truth.

It was a difficult task however, and all the inquiries that were instituted proved fruitless.

At last a reward of a thousand pounds was offered by Captain Anglesey for information which would lead to the discovery of the queen of the gipsies.

Some people said that Rachel Lee was dead, others again declared that she had with her tribe gone over to Spain.

Amongst others Izard heard of this magnificent reward, and he presented himself one morning attired as if for a journey.

"Well," said Carmen, "to what unexpected event am I to attribute the honour of this visit?"

"I have come to say farewell," he answered.

"Impossible. You cannot think of leaving me while I have the means of supplying your extravagancies."

"For a time. I shall not however be long absent. You have heard of the reward that is offered for the discovery of old Rachel Lee?"

"I have. Can it be the queen of our tribe? I have a distinct recollection of her," said Carmen.

"It is the same. If any one can find her, it is I," exclaimed Izard. "There is not a haunt of the old fox that I do not know."

"What is she wanted for?" asked Carmen.

"That I am unable to unravel. Enough for me that there is a thousand pounds to be gained. Besides, I want a holiday. I have been too quiet and respectable lately."

"So the old vagabond spirit has come over you."

"Yes. Does it not burn strongly within you? If not, you are no true gipsy," said Izard.

"That was always my impression. So far from wishing to roam, I am very comfortable here, and would, on the contrary, rather remain. I have the complete confidence of Captain Anglesey. His wife, Marigold, has now recovered her senses and adores me. Ralph is the only enigma."

"Why an enigma?" asked Izard.

"Because he does not seem to love me. I never met a man before whom I could not bring to my feet if I wished."

"Yet he is to be your husband in a few weeks' time."

"That is very true, yet I fear he loves another and has only consented to marry me from a sense of duty. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip, and I cannot fancy myself Ralph's wife until the fact is actually accomplished."

"I have only one fear, and that is of Quirino," said Izard.

"Nonsense," replied Carmen, impatiently. "It is unlikely that Quirino would come to England, and if he did how could he recognize Cassian in Mercedes Olisabot? It is not even likely."

Izard shook his head.

"I dream of that villain at night. He gives me the nightmare," he said.

"You were always a coward. Go and earn the thousand pounds, only do not bring your gipsy queen here. I have no wish to be recognised as one of the tribe. If I could only get rid of you I should never think of my low extraction."

"Ah, a little prosperity has spoiled you. For my part I like the tribe, and should be glad to see them all again," replied Izard.

"Good-bye then. A pleasant journey to you. Be back in time to be present at my marriage."

Suddenly the clock on the mantelpiece stopped ticking, and Carmen turned pale.

"That is a bad omen," she exclaimed.

"Are you becoming superstitious?" asked Izard, with a smile.

"I always was so more or less, and for a clock to stop in that manner is a sure sign of coming trouble. Go. You bring me bad luck. I must pension you off and keep you out of my sight."

"Farewell, dear sister: may success attend you," replied Izard, far from being offended at Carmen's manner.

She waved her hand impatiently, and he took his departure.

She sank down on a chair and became plunged in a deep reverie. Would she marry Ralph and so become the heiress of Anglesey's millions? Would she escape exposure at the hands of that cruel sleuth-hound, Quirino?

Time alone could show; but, fortunately for her, the day was drawing near when her marriage with Ralph was to be celebrated.

She had none of the sweet agitation of a young, beautiful and blushing bride. Her heart did not beat tumultuously at the ecstatic prospect of being all the world to a man one loves. She did not tremble with delight at giving herself up utterly for life to a cherished and kind husband. Her feelings were those which every hard-hearted, selfish adventurer must entertain.

Besides, marriage was no novelty to her. She had been the wife of the unfortunate Arthur Everton, who had paid by his life for his acquaintance with her.

While she was still wrapt in thought her maid entered.

In her hand she held a letter, which she seemed to attach great interest to.

"Do you want me?" exclaimed Carmen, pettishly.

"If so you have come at a wrong time. I wish to be by myself."

"Pardon me, miss," said Flora, who was as skilful in diplomacy as when she acted in the capacity of maid to Marigold. "I saw my master passing the garden and he dropped this letter from his pocket."

"Which one? You have two masters in this house."

"Mr. Ralph, miss," replied Flora.

Carmen's face lighted up with a new-born interest, and she exclaimed:

"What has the letter to do with me?"

"I could not tell at first, miss, but, thinking it

might contain some secret, I went out and picked it up."

"Why bring it to me, instead of restoring it to the owner?"

"Because I saw it was in a lady's handwriting, miss," said Flora.

Carmen's eyes flashed dangerously.

"And you have dared to read it?" she demanded.

"No, miss. I would not venture to take so great a liberty."

This was not strictly true, for in the privacy of a grove of laurels her curiosity had induced her to devour every line of it.

"That is well for you," Carmen exclaimed, adding, "Give it to me."

She opened the sheet, which was covered with writing in a delicate Italian hand and blotted in more than one place with hot, scalding tears, which had fallen from the burning eyes of the unhappy writer.

Its contents were as follows:

"I have but little to say to you, Ralph. When I first read your cruel letter breaking off our engagement I was like one who has received a heavy, crushing blow and can neither speak nor think. Could it be true? That was the question I asked myself. No, no, it cannot be true. I would not believe it. But then it was your writing, that writing which I have over and over again covered with passionate kisses. Is it possible, I wondered, that my beloved Ralph can forget all his vows? Did you not kneel at my feet, and, kissing my hand, declare that I should be yours for ever and that no power on earth should separate us? Oh, Ralph, still dearest, still most cherished, what is this dread power that has stepped between us and so changed your once loving heart that you coldly write and tell me you must give me up? My heart is broken. I have no hope, no purpose in life now. Yet I am wrong. I have one wish. That is to see you again. Come to me, Ralph. I shall ask no more favours. Come, come, oh, come and let me hear my sentences of death from your own lips, for it is death that you doom me to when you take away your love. Come, I beseech; on my knees I implore it. I have a right to demand it, and yet I beg it most humbly as a favour. See me once more. Tell me we must part and I will try to bear it. You shall have no reproaches, I will not weary you with a scene of tears. Do, do come. I must see you once more."

"As I expected," said Carmen. "Where is Mr. Ralph?"

"In the library I believe, miss. I heard the bell ring just now," replied Flora.

"Let Rouse tell him that I shall be obliged if he will pay me a visit."

"Yes, miss."

"Stay. Tell me, Flora, how I look," continued Carmen.

"As you always do, miss—very lovely."

Carmen unfastened a tress of her hair and let it fall over her shoulder, then she bathed her eyes in eau-de-cologne to make them red.

"Will that do?" she inquired.

"If you wish to look put out, miss, I can only say it is a most interesting arrangement. Of course you are supposed to have been worried and are crying."

"Exactly."

"Then you cannot improve your appearance, miss," said Flora.

"Thank you. Make haste and send him here," exclaimed Carmen.

The lady's-maid went away quickly, and Carmen composed herself in a reclining attitude upon a sofa.

"It is lucky I have that letter," she murmured as she crumpled it up angrily in her hand. "He must not see that girl. She would be dangerous in her grief. His secret is mine now. I must turn it to some advantage. I was sure something would happen when the clock stopped. Hush! here he comes."

A hurried footstep was heard in the passage, the door opened, and the next moment Ralph stood before her.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

Oh! too convincing—dangerously dear—  
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear!  
That weapon of her weakness she can wield,  
To save, subdue—at once her spear and shield:  
Avoid it—Virtue ebbes and Wisdom ebbes,  
Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers!  
What lost a world and bade a hero fly?  
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye. *Byron.*

It was easy to see that Ralph was much agitated, though he endeavoured to appear calm. Only that morning he had received the touching letter we have transcribed from the one woman in all the world he ever loved or could love.

"You have sent for me," he said.

"Yes. I wish to speak to you," replied Carmen, catching her breath. "How cold you are. Never a word of love do I hear from you. One would think you would call me dear or dearest. But no. You are always like an icicle—so cold, you chill my heart."

"If you have only sent for me to reproach me, I will go away again," he exclaimed, as a shade of displeasure crossed his brow.

"No, you shall not leave me. I have something to say to you."

"Say it if you please as quickly as possible. My time is valuable. I am busy."

"It is soon said; you love another—her name is Fanny, and only this morning you received a letter from her."

Ralph started and coloured up to the roots of his hair, while he hastily searched his pockets.

"It is of no use to look for the letter. I have it in my hand," said Carmen, quietly.

"Indeed. How did it fall into your possession?" he asked, with an effort.

"That is my business. I have it. It has revealed the state of your heart. You have been false to two women."

"Eyes false!" he repeated.

"Is it not so? Fanny, this woman, calling herself Fanny, says she is your affianced; well, am I not, too, affianced to you? One of us you must make miserable, perhaps both," said Carmen.

"It would have been better for you had you not meddled with my private affairs."

"Ah! a threat; you threaten me, but I will not lose my temper," replied Carmen. "I thought I would give you your liberty, but I cannot. She may be more beautiful than I; is that my fault? Why did you make me love you and promise to marry you? No, I will not release you, Ralph. I want you. I love you. You are to be my husband, and this woman shall not take you away from me."

"If you have read the letter as you suggest," he exclaimed, "you will see that I have broken off one engagement. It was contracted before I ever saw you. Why should you complain? Is it not rather Fanny who has cause for indignation?"

"That name again. Has she no other? Why call her by her Christian name? It is a term of endearment."

"Her name is Frances Proctor."

"Very well. Speak of her before me as Miss Proctor if you please. I will not tolerate her being called Fanny before me," said Carmen.

"You are exacting," he replied, still more angrily.

"Forgive me if I appear so. It is my love for you. I am jealous, and jealousy makes me indignant. Listen to me, Ralph; women of my stamp must not be played with. You shall not see that woman again."

"Shall not!" he repeated. "It seems to me that is an order, and I am not in the habit of being commanded."

"If you see her again something dreadful will happen. I will not hold myself answerable for the consequences."

He was silent and paced the room, the prey of great emotion, which he either could not or did not take the trouble to disguise.

"Speak to me; say something. I cannot bear this much longer," exclaimed Carmen. "Calm me, Ralph. Say you will sacrifice that woman to me."

Still he said nothing.

The tears coursed one another down Carmen's cheeks in silent eloquence.

Suddenly she rose and threw herself at his feet, and, catching his hand in hers, said:

"Oh, Ralph, love me, or my heart will break."

He stooped down as if he would kiss her face, but she repulsed him.

"No, not now, not yet," she replied. "Reassure me, Ralph. I am so ill, so agitated, I suffer so much. You men cannot tell how much. You cannot restrain yourselves as we can when you fall into a trap laid for you by a coquette. Think of what I have done for you. My heart is yours. I have kept myself so good all my life. Never has any man been encouraged by me. I have never flirted with any one but you."

Ralph was much moved by Carmen's admirable acting.

"Dearest Mercedes," he exclaimed, "I have not forgotten your devotion."

"He calls me dearest," she cried, rapturously, adding, "Am I really dearest?"

"Yes, you must be. It is fate."

"Dearest than the other woman? Dearest than the one who writes to you?" she asked.

"Have I not broken off with her?" he replied.

"You have? That, at least, is something in my favour. But will you never see her again?"

"Never."

Carmen rose to her feet, and, throwing herself into his arms, and holding her pretty and inviting lips up to him, exclaimed:

"Now, darling, you may kiss me; I am satisfied. But you must never see her again," she added, shivering, "never—never."

"Do you want any farther proof of my affection?" he asked.

"I feel I can trust you now. Oh, if I were to lose you. Do you know, Ralph, that I can feel for that poor girl?"

"Bless you, my darling. You have a good heart," he said.

"I hope so. I should be sorry for your sake if I have not. Yes, I repeat, I can feel for her. Oh, the agony I suffered just now. We women are such poor, weak things, you know, but our love is firmer and more lasting than that of you men."

The delicate tones of her tender voice thrilled through him. He would have been more than mortal had he resisted her.

"Well, my dear," she continued; "if you must make a choice between two women is it not better to give up her than me? She is not known to your friends. I, on the other hand, am the daughter of your guardian's oldest and staunchest friend!"

"Say no more. The die is cast. I am thine," he replied.

"But confess now," she said, looking up in his eyes coquettishly; "that you did waver this morning."

"A little. I admit it, but only for an instant."

"That is brave. If husband and wife are always brave and not deceive one another I can fancy that their lives will glide along like a pleasant stream. There must be no deception though," Carmen continued.

"You are right, dearest."

"He calls me dearest again. Oh, I am a happy girl. I was so miserable just a moment ago, and now I am so full of joy," cried Carmen.

"If I had seen you first, Mercedes, I should never have loved—"

"You must not say 'loved.' That to me is unbearable," she interrupted.

"I will say cared for Fanny—I mean Miss Proctor," he answered.

"That is a good boy. I am sure we shall be happy together. You learn your lessons so well," replied Carmen, smiling.

"I have such an accomplished instructress, that is it," he said, smiling for the first time.

"I feel as if I had escaped from a great danger," Carmen continued. "Do you know I can read the mind, Ralph? I can indeed. This morning you were fighting a dreadful battle. I could see it in your face. This is what you were thinking: 'I will leave Mercedes, who loves me, who is good and true; I will leave my guardian, who has done everything for me and made me rich; I will leave Marigold, who has had as much fondness for me as her afflicted state would permit; I will be an ingrate, a perjurer, a—'"

"Hush!" he said, sadly; "you must not overwhelm me. I am a villain as it is!"

"Oh, no; never say that."

"It is so, however, yet my consolation is that I now sacrifice one instead of many. It is a fearful situation for a man to be placed in, and the struggle has nearly killed me."

In truth he did look pale, ill, and careworn, and the soul-storm, which had racked him day and night, had left its traces of devastation behind.

"My poor Ralph," said Carmen, caressing him. "You are a noble fellow."

"No, I am not noble. I am simply unfortunate. I have lost my self-respect, and when that is the case a man is poor indeed."

"Was it my fault? Do not be harsh and unjust, Ralph," she said.

"I do not say one word against you, dearest," he exclaimed, with a tinge of his former impatience. "You are an angel. I blame myself alone."

"You will soon recover the former healthy tone of your mind. Remember, Ralph, I am to be your physician. Look at me, dear; am I not more beautiful than she?"

"You are divine," he answered.

"No, no; I am only a poor, sinful little woman like the rest of my sex, yet I am vain enough to think I have some attractions, or else my glass misleads me. But, come, we have made it up, haven't we? You feel more settled in your mind now?"

"Much more. I will try to keep calm. Give me the letter," he said.

Carmen looked quickly and inquiringly at him.

"Do you want it?" she asked. "What do you want it for? It seems to me that this letter may resemble a love token. No, you shall not have it. I can see it will be best for both of us if you do not have it. I will destroy it."

A deep sigh broke from Ralph.

Carmen tore the crumpled note into little pieces and threw them out of the window.

One little bit fluttered back on the wings of the wind and found refuge on Ralph's shirt; next his heart.

He seized it hastily, and hid it in his coat sleeve. It was a priceless treasure. He would have it set

in gold, for it was the last memento of the miserable Fanny.

Luckily Carmen did not perceive this, or she would have upbraided him.

"Now I am your own; and you, Ralph, belong to me alone!" she exclaimed, triumphantly. "I could not at first understand why I should occupy the second place in your heart, but, since I am the conqueror and own it all, I can afford to forget. Just now we were talking of love-letters, have you anything to remind you of Miss Proctor? What is in the locket attached to your chain?"

"Nothing worth looking at," he replied, in some confusion.

"Ah! you said that before when I asked the same question, and I did not press the point," she continued, carelessly. "Now I am curious. Let me look. Open it for me, please."

With evident reluctance he did so.

She beheld a face set in blue enamel—a pretty baby face, not a handsome, commanding one like her own, but a childish face, having its power of fascination, with a little dimpled mouth like a rosebud, two blue eyes, dove-like in their confiding simplicity, and fair silken hair, not her own rich auburn, yet attractive; and adding to the beauty of the ensemble.

"Who is this?" she asked.

"A—A friend of mine," replied Ralph.

"She must be a great friend to arrive at the honour of being put in your locket. This friend of yours is Miss Proctor. I know it. Do not deny it. Is it not so?" said Carmen.

"Yes. What do you think of her?" he answered, desperately.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing at all. As a toy—as a plaything," she said, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders, "why she might pass, but as a wife, to introduce to one's friends and to the world, you might as well have an artificial thing—what do you call it?—a doll."

"You are severe."

"No, I am simply just. You asked for my opinion or I should not have given it. Take it out, please, it has no right there now; or let me do it for you. Perhaps it is best that I should be the executioner in this case."

With the end of a needle she lifted the glass, and, taking out the portrait of Miss Proctor, almost rudely cast it into the fireplace, where it lay with other unconsidered trifles.

Ralph shuddered. She could see him shudder at this act of profanation, but he said nothing.

"That is over. When one means to do a certain thing, Ralph," she exclaimed, "take my word for it the best way is to have no half-measures."

"How do you mean?" he asked.

"I will tell you. Suppose a man means to give up a habit, say smoking; he must not compromise the matter by taking an occasional cigarette. He is in that case as great a smoker in his heart as ever he was. So it is with a woman. If you want to give a woman up you must not keep anything in your possession which will remind you of her. Not even a bit of ribbon, or lace, or an old glove that she has worn. Cast her off utterly, or not at all, if you value your peace of mind. You may plunge into dissipation if you like, and back in the smiles of another, but the heart has its idle moments, and then beware of danger."

"You are quite a philosopher," he said, with a sickly smile.

"I understand the heart and perhaps human nature more than you do, that is all. But," she added, seeing that she had completely vanquished him, "I have an appointment to drive out with Mrs. Anglesey to scout the Clifton Woods for gipsies."

"To-day?" he replied.

"Yes. That search after gipsies is quite a craze of hers, is it not?"

"Oh, no. Did you not hear what Lord Kimbolton said before he died?" replied Ralph, anxious to change the subject.

"No, I did not take the trouble to inquire. Family secrets are always a worry to me, and whenever Mrs. Anglesey, or Marigold, or she kindly lets me call her, begins her gossip, I try and talk about something else."

"His lordship confessed that Rachel Lee, the queen of the gipsies, stole Marigold's child by his orders. You know the pitiful history of Mrs. Anglesey, I presume?"

"Oh, yes. She lost her daughter, and there was a feud between Mrs. Anglesey and Lord Kimbolton. Somebody stole somebody else's wife. Whose wife was it?" replied Carmen, with a smile.

"Captain Anglesey was engaged to Lady Kimbolton before her marriage, and she, thinking her husband dead, married the captain. They had one child, a girl, and Lord Kimbolton out of revenge had the child stolen. It has been ever since among gipsies, and Rachel Lee is the person who can tell where she is."

Carmen became thoughtful.

She knew the whole of the tribe well, and remembered more than one baby coming mysteriously into the hands of the gipsies; but she recollected nothing that struck her particularly in this connection.

"A pleasant drive, darling. One kiss before you go," said Ralph. "I feel that a weight is removed from my mind. I am far from happy, but—"

Carmen stopped his utterance with a kiss, which was followed by another and another.

"When people are engaged and soon to be married, and when they love one another as I love you and I hope you love me," she exclaimed, "they may kiss. Run away like a good pot, and let me see you smiling at dinner time."

"I will try to smile," he replied.

"And one more thing, dear Ralph—"

"What is that?"

"Try also to be kind to me—kind in your manner. Say pretty things to me. You don't know how much women value little attentions of that sort. It is a sort of manna we feed upon. Be less practical and more kind."

"Very well, dearest. You said I learnt my lessons well," he answered. "I will not forget what you say."

He kissed her again and left the apartment.

Before he had time to reach the library Teddy Rouse, who was as much devoted to him as Flora was to Carmen, met him.

"What is it, Rouse?" he exclaimed.

"A telegram for you, sir," replied Teddy.

He took it out of the domestic's hand, hastily entered the library, and broke open the envelope. A glance sufficed to make him acquainted with the contents.

Over his face came a deadly pallor.

"Heaven help me!" he murmured. "I am the most miserable of men!"

(To be continued.)

## WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

### CHAPTER XLII.

THE earl's attack proved to be a slight one, and by sunset he was on his feet and able to listen to the dowager's plan for having Lady Marguerite married before the next London season.

"My diamonds are gone," said the old countess, "and something else will be gone if I leave matters alone much longer. I tell you, Strathspey, I've made up my mind to have the wedding this autumn. What do you say?"

The earl considered for a moment. He was feeling miserably feeble and hopeless just then; and the doctors had told him plainly that if he gave way to his passions, or suffered himself to be excited, he was liable to die at any moment.

In the event of his death, it would be better and safer for have poor little Pearl married and well cared for. Sir Bayard Broughton seemed to be a good man.

"Well," he replied, at last, "the child is so young, but if she is willing, I am!"

"Enough said!" exclaimed the countess; "we'll make her willing, if that's all! So it's settled! You can make your arrangements, and I'll make mine; and we'll have the wedding when we get back from Ravenswood."

She caught up her stick and hobbled off, making her way straight to Lady Marguerite's boudoir, which she entered unannounced.

The poor girl was reclining on a couch, her sweet face looking inexpressibly sad and hopeless.

"Marguerite," began the dowager, abruptly, "I shall order your wedding trousseau before we start for Ravenswood. Have you any suggestions to make, any particular fancy in regard to it?"

Poor Pearl struggled bravely for a moment, and then burst into passionate sobbing.

"Oh, Aunt Neville!" she cried, crossing the room and throwing herself at her aunt's knees, "I've tried to keep it back, but the truth must be told. I do not love Sir Bayard, and I cannot marry him!"

Lady Neville sat in silence and grieved amazement.

"Why, Marguerite!" she exclaimed, at last; "after you agreed to the arrangement, and it has been made public?"

"I know," sobbed the poor girl; "I did it to please papa and the countess, and I hoped I should like Sir Bayard. But I do not—I cannot—I dislike him more every hour I live. I hate him—I hate him!"

"Marguerite!" cried Lady Neville, sternly.

She had no children of her own, and her heart was set on her niece's marriage. She had no sympathy for the poor child's agony, she only feared that her prospects might be ruined, that the dowager might take offence.

But the dowager sat like a statue, holding the jewelled knob of her cane.

"Marguerite," cried Lady Neville, sternly, "what do you mean?"

The girl did not answer, she only sobbed as if her heart was breaking.

All at once the countess started up, and went across the room.

"Marguerite Strathspey," she said, putting her lips to her ear, "do you want to kill your father?"

The girl looked up with affrighted eyes.

"The doctors say that the least worry or excitement may kill him without a moment's warning! He has set his heart on this marriage, on seeing you comfortably settled before he dies; you can disappoint him, frustrate all his plans, excite him, kill him, if you like—I have not a word to say—there are plenty other people who will be glad enough to get my fortune."

Then the countess went back to her seat, leaving the poor, affrighted child kneeling at her aunt's feet. She looked up, her blue eyes full of piteous terror.

"My child," said Lady Neville, gravely, "what the countess says is true—your poor father is in a very feeble condition. Doctor Gregory warned me only yesterday that he must not be troubled or excited, or the consequences might be fatal. Think of that, Marguerite, and try to school your foolish heart into obedience. You have always been a gentle, obedient child. Do not disappoint us all now, and break your fond father's heart."

A rap at the door interrupted them, and a servant looked in.

"If you please, my lady, the earl would like to see Lady Marguerite in the library."

Poor Pearl arose, her face tear-stained, her bright hair in disorder.

"My dear," said Lady Neville, "compose yourself, I implore you, before you go to your father; and if you value his life do not disappoint and distress him."

When Marguerite entered the library she found her father seated in an arm-chair, his head lying back, and his white, worn face looking sad and hopeless. He reached out his arms to clasp her, a smile brightening his eyes. Marguerite flew to his embrace; she loved her father with all her poor, motherless little heart.

"Darling little Pearl," he murmured, "you are all poor papa's comfort now!"

By an effort Pearl kept back her tears and choked down the sobs that seemed to be bursting her heart.

"Dear, dear papa!" she whispered, caressing his hair with her soft little fingers.

The proud earl thrilled to his heart's core, her dainty touches were so like the caresses of the wife he had once loved so fondly.

"Little Pearl," he began, at last, his voice unsteady from emotion, "do you love the man who is to be your husband?"

For a moment Pearl did not answer, and in that moment she endured the agony of a life-time.

"I don't think, dearest papa," she said then, her young voice forced into silvery calmness, "that I love any one in the world but you."

The earl drew her very close to him.

"Ah, little one," he said, "your love is very precious; but I may die and leave you, Pearl."

"Oh, papa, dearest papa!" she cried, in consternation.

"Nay, my child, you must hear me. I am not strong—I may have to leave you soon, little girl, and it would be a great comfort to me to see you the wife of some good man beyond the reach of all harm. I think Sir Bayard is a good man, and he seems very fond of you. You are willing to marry him, Pearl?"

Again came that awful struggle for calmness, lest she should betray herself and excite her father.

She conquered, for, like her mother before her, she was capable of immolating her own heart for the sake of one she loved.

"I am willing to do anything in the world that will make you happy, dear papa," she replied, her voice calm and steady.

"Then you do not object to an early marriage? You will marry Sir Bayard this autumn?"

"I will do whatever you desire me, papa."

"That's my own good little daughter! I do desire it very much, my dear; I shall feel much easier when you are Sir Bayard's wife. So it is settled, and the queer old dowager may have it all just as she fancies. We'll have a grand wedding in November, and papa will run down to London in a few weeks and purchase the very rarest diamonds that can be found, to put in the place of those you have lost. There—kiss me now, and run away; you have made me happy and I'll try to get an hour's sleep."

She kissed him and left the library with a slow and dragging step.

Diamonds for her wedding. What bitter, bitter mockery!

## CHAPTER XLII.

DESPITE the earl's illness and Lady Marguerite's hidden heartache, they all went to the ball at Dalewood.

The earl, haughty and handsome in his exquisite evening suit, betrayed no sign of the hopeless misery that consumed his heart, save in his death-white face and despairing eyes.

The excited old Countess of Mortlake went as a matter of course, rustling in her rich brocade, with poor little Pearl under her wing, looking like a white dove in the clutches of a vulture, and Sir Bayard brought dancing attendance on her, flushed and radiant with success.

Lady Neville and Sir Marshall went also, but young Lord Angus ordered his roan mare and galloped down to Doctor Renfrew's.

The ball was a grand affair and very largely attended by the peasantry as well as the nobility of the county. The Dalewood grounds were beautifully adorned and illuminated, and there was a long table in the old banquet hall laden with every conceivable delicacy; flagons of wine and ale ran like water.

The young heir of Dalewood, in whose honour all this gaiety was going on, was gaily called upon by old Sir Ralph, his father, to open the ball with the prettiest maiden present. A difficult task it would be to choose one from among so many said one and another; but young Sir Ralph did not hesitate an instant. He made his way to the terrace, where the earl's party were seated, and chose Lady Marguerite.

The old countess chuckled with pleasure as he led her forth in the eyes of the vast assembly, slender and fair as a lily, in her gleaming, gossamer robes, with pearls amid the golden meshes of her silken hair—the fairest and sweetest maiden present; indeed, the fairest in all wide England.

"See what I've done for you," she said, nudging Sir Bayard with her elbow. "Would you ever have won such a wife as that, think ye, without my help?"

Sir Bayard bowed deeply, his gray eyes flashing with admiration as they followed the graceful figure of his affianced bride.

"She's agreed to my plan," continued the dowager; "we're to have the wedding in November. Bayard brought on, you're a lucky fellow, luckier than you deserve to be I'm thinking!"

Sir Bayard flushed to the roots of his yellow hair, but he met the dowager's keen glance with bold, unblinking eyes.

"I don't pretend to say that I deserve my good luck, your ladyship," he replied.

"You don't, eh?" exclaimed the countess—"well now, I want you to deserve it—don't you know that? Bayard brought on," she added, suddenly, with another keen glance above her glasses, "you're my kinsman, and I used to like you years ago, but you've changed—I don't like the look in your eyes. What is it? What evil thing have you done that has left its brand upon you?"

The baronet was fairly gasping.

"Why, my dear countess," he began, his voice unsteady and his eyes shifting beneath her gaze, "it is unfair, ungenerous—"

"Oh, fiddlesticks," interrupted the dowager, "that sort of nonsense is wasted on me. I have eyes and can see, if I do wear glasses. I'm half sorry that I didn't leave you to your vagabond life—I don't wonder that Pearl dislikes you."

"My dear countess," began Sir Bayard again, growing white to the lips and trembling.

"Hush," interrupted the lady; "I tell you I can't trust you, and I'm sorry I didn't leave you to starve; but you're my kinsman, and 'tis not my habit to turn back when I've once started. I'll go on, but I shall keep my eye on you, young man, and mark what I say. When that pretty child yonder is your wife if to my knowing you cause her one hour's sorrow you shall rue it, you shall, Bayard brought on. You know I never make idle threats."

"Indeed, my dear countess," the baronet hastened to reply, his cheeks flushing and his eyes glowing with an emotion that was really sincere, "there is no need of your caution. I love Lady Marguerite too well to cause her sorrow. I would lay down my life to win her regard."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," returned the countess, somewhat mollified; "she's a good, affectionate child, and if you do as you ought you'll win her over by-and-by."

The music had ceased and the young heir of Dalewood was conducting his lovely partner back to the terrace, half way down the tree-shaded avenue, when a young man stopped them, a tall, handsome man, with a profusion of black, curling hair and a heavy, foreign-looking black beard.

"Sir Ralph," he said, touching the young man's elbow and nodding significantly in the direction of Lady Marguerite.

"With Lady Marguerite's permission," replied Sir Ralph, cordially, "it will afford me great pleasure."

Lady Marguerite inclined her graceful head in gracious assent, and her escort proceeded to present to her Captain Ross Forsythe, a young officer, just returned from India. The handsome captain uttered a few pleasant sentences and begged for the honour of her hand in the ensuing dance; and after his name had been duly inscribed on Lady Marguerite's tablet the three proceeded to the terrace together, and the captain was introduced to the earl's party.

"Lady Marguerite," protested Sir Bayard as the next dance was forming, "I surely thought, this dance was to be mine."

"You did not ask for it, Sir Bayard," replied Pearl, shrinking away from him in involuntary aversion.

The handsome captain took her hand and drew it within his arm, his bright brown eyes regarding the scowling baronet with a steady gaze.

"Sorry to supplant you, Sir Bayard," he said, pleasantly; "but I could not relinquish my right in your favour on any account. Come, Lady Marguerite."

They floated away under the whispering arches of the oaks, and Sir Bayard, returning to his seat on the terrace, sat and watched them with no pleasant look in his eyes.

The captain was dancing charmingly and Pearl was grace and loveliness combined.

"Brought on," suggested the countess, with another nudge, "if you don't look sharp that handsome captain will be your rival—he's just the sort of man to win a girl's heart."

The baronet set his teeth hard together.

Somehow the very presence of the captain disconcerted him.

The dance over he went down to claim Lady Marguerite.

The captain resigned her with gallant regret and then sauntered along beside Sir Bayard in casual conversation.

"I happen to have heard of you before, Sir Bayard," he remarked as they reached the terrace, "I had a friend out in India a year or so ago, who spoke of you so frequently that your name got to be quite familiar."

The baronet bowed, but a slow pallor crept up to his face, giving it an awful, ghastly look.

The captain's bright brown eyes held him with their steady glance.

"No doubt you remember him," he continued, pleasantly. "Colonel Brooke—Colonel Richard Brooke—of the queen's cavalry."

The baronet struggled to speak, but his white lips gave forth no sound; the perspiration broke out in great beads on his forehead, and his knees refused to support him.

"What ails the man?" shrieked the dowager.

"Brought on, are you ill?" questioned the earl, coming to his side.

"I—I—it is a sudden faintness," gasped Sir Bayard. "It is over now—or will be when I get a glass of water."

"Allow me," interposed the captain, gracefully, taking possession of Lady Marguerite, "till you have sufficiently recovered."

They floated off again to the sound of a rhythmic waltz, while Sir Bayard strolled off under the trees, muttering bitter imprecations with every breath.

At the door of the earl's carriage, when the pallid daybreak began to streak the East, Captain Forsythe made his adieu.

"With your permission," he said, detaching a half-blown bud from Lady Pearl's bouquet and fastening it in his vest, "I shall see you again. Tomorrow I run up to London, but on my return—"

Sir Bayard crowded himself between, cutting short the sentence, but the captain's bright brown eyes made ample amends for it as he bowed himself away; and Lady Marguerite, plighted to marry Sir Bayard brought on in three brief months, went home to dream, through the morning hours, of those self-same brown eyes and that pleasant, musical voice.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

LORD ANGUS, declining to attend the Dalewood ball, mounted his roan mare, and galloped across the downs to Dr. Renfrew's pretty cottage.

Since the afternoon when his fall had thrown him upon Maggie's hospitality he had been a constant visitor, and the old doctor, although he did not fancy the young peer, had treated him civilly.

He found Maggie alone that evening, her father having been called out to consult with the practising physician of the neighbourhood on a critical case.

She was sitting on the portico under a canopy of honey-suckle and rose-vine, with her guitar at her feet, and a little pet poodle on her lap.

Very charming she looked in her delicate blue muslin, with her dainty laces and shining bronze-brown hair, and the young peer's eyes lit with delight as they rested on her.

"So you're all alone, are you, Maggie?" he said,

after the salutations of the evening, seating himself on the steps near her feet, and tossing his hat and jewelled riding-whip out on the grass. "Where's the doctor?"

"Gone to Blackwood Grange, to meet Doctor Gregory in consultation," replied Maggie, running her white fingers through her poodle's snaggly hair.

"He is? I'm glad of it," replied the young lord; "for I rode over to have a quiet talk with you. The folks from the Castle have all gone to the ball at Dalwood, but I preferred coming to see you, Maggie!"

"Did you, my lord?" replied Maggie, serenely, with never a flush on her fair, pearl-like cheeks.

"Yes, I did. And I may as well out with it at once," he added, bluntly, moving a trifle nearer to her feet. "I love you, Maggie; don't you know I do?"

"Well, my lord," answered Maggie, even more coolly serene than before, "to tell you the truth, I have never spent one thought upon the subject."

"Cool and skittish!" uttered the young peer, under his breath. "Well, I rather like that—a silly that takes to the bit at once is never worth much."

Then he continued, aloud:

"Well, I want you to think of it, Maggie, for I do love you better than any other woman alive. See here, what I've brought you!"

He drew from his pocket a heavy ring, studded with magnificent diamonds, and held it up to her; but Maggie did not remove her white fingers from her poodle's curly head.

"Won't you let me see if it will fit you?" he continued, making an effort to obtain possession of her hand.

She drew back with quiet dignity.

"No, my lord; 'tis useless; I shall never wear it, or accept it."

Her cool, quiet voice exasperated him, and his hot blood began to stir.

"Oh, nonsense!" he said. "It is well enough to play shy at first, Maggie; but 'tis time to drop that rôle now. I love you, I tell you, and I am one of the richest men in England, and able to let you live like a queen. You shall have the richest dresses and costliest jewels in London, and the handsomest rooms to live in, and servants to come at your beck and call—what do you say, Maggie?"

"Say to what, Lord Strathspay?"

The young man faltered a little; his eyes fell beneath her steady gaze.

"Why," he said, at last, "I'm going to London in a week, and I'll arrange it all, and have your apartments fit for a queen if you'll come with me—will you, Maggie?"

He arose, and put out his arms to clasp her; but her ringing voice arrested him.

"Lord Strathspay!" she cried, rising also and confronting him, her waxen cheeks flushing, her eyes in a blaze, "don't dare to put your hand on me! You have insulted me in my father's house—that is enough! Leave me now, sir!"

He was utterly confounded for an instant. The idea that she would refuse his love, and the luxuries he could give her, had never entered his dull brain. He thought to have her for the asking, yet her passionate refusal did not seem to anger him. His lenden eyes flashed with renewed ardour.

"By Jove, you're worth the winning, Maggie!" he replied, at last. "I like you for your mettle. You shall be my wife—do you hear?—my true and lawful wife! I'll make you Lady Strathspay!"

Her scornful laugh answered him.

"If you were Earl of Strathspay this hour," she replied, "and would make me your wife, I would refuse you. Go now, I command you, sir."

"I will not go," he answered, stoutly, his temper beginning to rise. "Do you think I'm going to be foiled in this way? I've set my heart on having you, and have you I will, by fair means or foul! You'd better accept my offer peacefully. It is a fine offer for a girl like you. Will you be my wife?"

"No, sir."

"You shall!—I swear you shall!" he cried, half choking with passion, and, seizing her hand, he strove to force the ring upon it.

But Maggie wrenched her hand away, and sent the costly jewel flashing out into the summer moonlight.

"What's this?" exclaimed the old doctor, coming upon them unobserved. "Maggie, what does this mean?"

"It means, father," panted Maggie, her eyes still flashing lightning, "that Lord Strathspay has insulted me, and he now declares he will force me to be his wife."

The old Scotchman turned upon him fiercely.

"Your wife!" he repeated, with indescribable scorn. "Who are you, to ask for any man's daughter? You are not a Strathspay! Your low, nameless blood tells in your face! Dare to trouble my daughter

again, or intrude yourself here, and I'll wear this out over your cowardly shoulders!"

The old man brandished his whip, and the young nobleman retreated before it step by step; but his face was something horrible to look upon.

"Girl," he hissed, his head protruding, his greenish eyes glittering, "you shall be sorry for this, and you shall be mine—mark my words, you shall be mine yet!"

The doctor brought down his lash with a sharp blow.

"Go, sir," he commanded; "don't stand there threatening my daughter!"

Stinging with pain, the young lord vaulted into his saddle and galloped away.

"I'm afraid of him, papa—I'm afraid he'll give us trouble," whispered Maggie, looking after him in the summer moonlight.

(To be continued.)

## FIGHTING WITH FATE.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

THE hour was growing late when Lord Waldemar returned home from Lady Thaxter's residence with Miss Floyd and Mrs. Watchley. The stern old baron was very silent and abstracted, but he ran up his house steps with a vigour and lightness he had not shown for years, and when he halted in the hall to remove his great-coat there was seen to be a light in his keen blue eyes such as no one living had ever seen in them.

Miss Floyd passed into the drawing-room, which was brightly lighted and glowing with warmth. Upon crossing the threshold she uttered an exclamation which caused Mrs. Watchley to hasten after her, and Lord Waldemar followed them.

Mr. Darrel Moer had been gracefully reclining upon a sofa at the moment of Miss Floyd's entrance, but he had arisen immediately, and was now exchanging greetings with the ladies, holding the hand of the heiress in his and pressing it with the warmth of a lover.

"So you have followed us to town, Darrel?" said Lord Waldemar, with an easy nod. "I expected you up before this. How fares your business in Lancashire?"

"Oh, I had no business there, beyond seeing Carrington, my lord," replied Moer. "He has nearly recovered from his illness. That is, the crisis is past, and his physician declares him out of danger," amended Moer. "He sat up to-day for the first time within a fortnight. He depends upon me to amuse him, and I shall have to go and see him again soon, probably."

"Indeed!" said Lord Waldemar, with a cynical smile. "You and Carrington are modern Damon and Pythias. I am delighted to hear that Carrington is so much better. Yet he looked ruddy and well as usual when I saw him in Rotten Row to-day upon a prancing, curvetting horse, the admiration of the ladies and the despair of the gentlemen. He must have preceded you to town by some hours—poor, interesting invalid!"

Darrel Moer seemed for a moment completely overwhelmed.

The truth was he had not seen Carrington since the day of the fatal marriage, but he supposed him to be at Lynshire Place. He—Moer—had been to Southport in search of young Honor Gint, and had made a flying trip to Bolton and to the Red House, where he had seen Mrs. Gint and Miss Milner, but obtained no information whatever concerning the whereabouts of his young bride. He had then returned to Southport, and had managed to extract from Miss Brown of Oak Cottage the fact, which she had chosen at first to withhold, that Honor had gone up to London with Sir Hugh Tregaron and a strange lady, who had come in a cab and taken Honor with her to the station.

Upon this information Moer and his valet had come to London, arriving this very evening, and coming directly to Lord Waldemar's house in Park Lane.

"Ah, yes," Darrel Moer struggled to say, after a brief and awkward silence, in response to his uncle's nearly annihilating remark. "You saw George Carrington, I suppose, my lord. He is in town. But I referred to his cousin, Albert Carrington, you know."

As there was an Albert Carrington, a chronic invalid, who had his home at Lynshire Place, this explanation was not questioned.

"Have you been to the opera this evening, Miss Hilda?" inquired Moer, not giving the baron time to reply, if he had so desired, to the last remark.

"No," said Miss Floyd, languidly drawing off her gloves. "We dined with Lady Thaxter; merely an informal dinner, but remained rather late."

Darrel Moer was interested. It flashed upon his memory that Lady Thaxter was the aunt of Sir Hugh Tregaron.

"Was there a large company?" he inquired.

"Oh, no; merely ourselves," answered Miss Floyd, "and some resident guests of Lady Thaxter. First and foremost was a Hungarian countess, a Lady Rothsmere, who wore diamonds of immense size, and a dress that must certainly have been made in Paris. She was the most striking-looking lady I ever saw."

Lord Waldemar's bronzed face flushed, and he walked toward the fire and leaned one arm upon the marble mantelpiece.

"And who else was present?" inquired Moer.

"Her ladyship's nephew, a baronet, very handsome, but very grave also, named Sir Hugh Tregaron. He was polite; I daresay he could not be otherwise, but he had a preoccupied manner that was not very flattering to me," said Miss Floyd. "There was a third permanent guest at Lady Thaxter's house, a young lady of my own age, a Miss Gint; that was all."

Darrel Moer started violently. He had not thought that Sir Hugh Tregaron would have taken Honor to the house of Lady Thaxter, but he now wondered that the idea had not occurred to him. The young Cornish baronet would naturally have placed Honor under the protection of his noble relative, where she would be safe from Moer, and sheltered from even the breath of calumny.

His sudden excitement was not unmarked.

"Miss Gint is from Lancashire," said Lord Waldemar, regarding his nephew keenly. "Have you ever met her, Darrel?"

"Never!" responded Moer, with unnecessary vehemence. "I never before even heard her name. Gint? Gint? It is not common."

The baron was not entirely satisfied, but he did not choose to declare his suspicions that his nephew was not frank with him.

Mrs. Watchley and Miss Floyd discussed their hostess, the Hungarian countess, Miss Gint and the dinner with considerable freedom.

Lord Waldemar excused himself and withdrew to his library.

Mrs. Watchley looked after the baron with a smile and said as he closed the door:

"I am not sure, Mr. Moer, that his lordship will not cheat Miss Floyd in her turn out of the Waldemar succession. If he were to contract a second marriage, and a son should be born to him, Hilda would be left out in the cold, as you now are."

Darrel Moer laughed lightly.

"Your suggestion is absurd," he said. "My uncle is sixty-eight years old, although he is so vigorous and hale, and seems so much younger. He is too old to marry. Besides, he worships the memory of his wife, who died young, and she was one of those tender, clinging women that stern men such as he adore. Marry again! Mrs. Watchley, you do not know Lord Waldemar."

"I am inclined to think that it is you who do not know him, Mr. Moer," declared Mrs. Watchley, seriously. "Men who are older than Lord Waldemar marry, and why should not he? He admires this beautiful Hungarian countess, and has fallen dead in love with her. His glances followed her everywhere. When she went to the conservatory with Hilda he was uneasy and distracted during her absence. When she returned he brightened up as if the sun had suddenly shone upon him. He may worship the memory of his dead wife, Mr. Moer, but he is beginning to worship this living lady. He talked politics with her, society gossip, and he even talked of himself, and that is an unusual subject with him. Lady Rothsmere can become Lady Waldemar any day she likes."

The earnestness of Mrs. Watchley impressed Moer. His brow contracted after an unusual fashion.

"Who is this Hungarian countess?" he asked.

"A lady some thirty years old, the widow of a Hungarian count. Her wealth is almost fabulous. She has an estate which resembles a principality. Lady Thaxter visited her in Hungary last year, and found her living in regal state."

"I have heard of the statesman, Count Rothsmere," said Moer, thoughtfully. "He was a power in his day. He died two years ago, or thereabouts, at an advanced age, and left a beautiful young wife, I have heard. And this lady is his widow. She won't marry Lord Waldemar, you may depend upon it. The Hungarian Countess of Rothsmere can marry a German prince if she likes. She would never marry an English baron."

"Did you ever see her, Mr. Moer?" asked Miss Floyd.

Darrel Moer's face flushed strangely.

"I saw her once," he said, with a singular hesitation. "It was at Baden-Baden some years ago. She was the great lady of the place, the 'bright particular star' to which all did homage."

He hastened to change the subject as if it were unpleasant to him.

Mrs. Watchley did not take part in the conversation that followed, and presently dozed in her chair.

Darrel Moer seized upon the opportunity thus presented to approach nearer to Miss Floyd, who had laid aside her wrappings and was looking very pretty in her evening dress.

"Hilda," he said, with a well-counterfeited passion, having in reality not the faintest glimmering of love for her, "I carried your image with me to Lancashire, photographed upon my heart. I hasten back to you from the bedside of my friend to lay again my heart at your feet. You promised to consider my suit. You have not known me long, but I know that our natures are similar, and that I can make you happy. Give me my answer to-night. Say that you will marry me."

"You are anxious that I should accept you before seeing any one else," remarked Miss Floyd, coarsely, and with evident dissatisfaction. "One doesn't want to be urged into a marriage. As the heiress of Waldemar, I can marry whom I please. A glance, a word, would have brought Sir Hugh Tregaron to my feet to-night. I should like to hold a small court around me whenever I enter society; I should like to refuse a score of suitors, and here you ask me to bind myself to you."

"A marriage between you and me would consolidate the Waldemar and Floyd interests," said Moer. "My uncle will leave me heir to all his freehold property, all his money in bank, all his personal estate. It would simply matters if we were to join our interests in one."

He knew very well that Lord Waldemar had done all for him that he could ever do; that not one penny of his lordship's property would be left to him at the baron's death.

His interests urged him to hasten on his marriage with the heiress.

She, spurred by the secret knowledge of her false position as Lord Waldemar's heiress, yet half averse to Moer, and longing for social triumphs as belle and coquette, was yet forced to accept him, and so connect her interests with his.

In default of a lawful heir or heiress in the direct line of descent from Lord Waldemar, Darrel Moer would stand first in the line of succession, and was therefore a safe match for Miss Floyd.

"Speak, my own love," urged Moer as she hesitated.

"Yes, then," said Miss Floyd, rather ungraciously.

"You will marry me, Hilda?" asked Moer, it must be confessed with some astonishment, despite his remarkable vanity.

"Yes," again assented Miss Floyd. "There, don't ruffle my bertha, Darrel. That lace is priceless. I suppose we are betrothed, but there's no use in going into ecstasies over it. There's no sense in it."

Darrel Moer refrained from kissing her, but he pressed her hand, and placed upon the finger a betrothal ring, which had served him a score of times before, and in this manner the pair so well worthy of each other were betrothed.

"I shall speak to my uncle to-morrow," said Moer, in a glow of exultation. "You have made me very happy, Hilda."

"Grandpapa says I am not to go into society this winter," said Miss Floyd, discontentedly. "He means to procure governesses and masters for me, and make a school-girl of me. I won't submit to such treatment."

"You won't be obliged to submit to it if you will marry me immediately," cried Moer, eager to secure his prize. "As my wife, you can enter society at once, be presented to the queen, give parties, and become a belle. As my wife, you will be courted and fêted and sung about. I shall leave you an absolute freedom of action, and shall live only to carry out your wishes."

This halcyon view enchanted Miss Floyd. Marriage with Darrel Moer was from that moment, in her eyes, a gate through which she would enter the gay world for which she sighed.

"Very well," she declared as if the compact were of the most ordinary description. "I'll marry you when you like on those conditions. Marriage for me means freedom. Mrs. Watchley," she added, arousing her companion, "I have promised to marry Mr. Moer. It's all settled, and we are to be married immediately, if grandpapa consent."

Mrs. Watchley started up broad awake, her gold-mounted eye-glasses slipping from her hooked nose, her eyes full of a triumphant expression.

"I am very much pleased—very much pleased indeed," she exclaimed, heartily. "Mr. Moer, I love my dear Hilda as if she were my own child, and I take a mother's pride and pleasure in giving her to you. She is a tender plant, one of those rare flowers of existence which need to be cherished and

guarded. You are my lord's own nephew; his sister's son, and have grown up at Floyd Manor under my lord's own eyes as it were until your manhood. I am sure I could not have found a better husband for my dear Hilda, although her birth and beauty might win for her a ducal coronet. I hope and believe you will both be happy."

"I don't doubt it, madam," said Darrel Moer, bowing.

"Lord Waldemar must be told to-morrow," said Mrs. Watchley, in a tone of decision. "And our Hilda shall be a bride and enter society this very season. No musty books for you now, my dear; no music-masters; no teachers of deportment. I congratulate you upon your emancipation."

It would be difficult to tell which of the three was best pleased with the projected marriage. Each had secret motives urging them to hasten on the wedding-day.

They lingered in the drawing-room a full hour longer, and then separated for the night.

The thoughts of each were characteristic, as they entered their several rooms.

"Hilda is provided for now, let what will happen," Mrs. Watchley said to herself as she locked her door and proceeded to doze. "The real heiress of Waldemar is dead, or living somewhere in obscurity where she will never be found. Darrel Moer is next heir, and, in any case now, Hilda is sure to be Lady of Waldemar. Grimrod will be delighted. I'll telegraph him secretly to-morrow morning, and he will be here to-morrow night. If Lord Waldemar should refuse to sanction the match, Grimrod will know what next to do."

The reflections of Hilda Floyd ran in a somewhat similar groove, as she submitted her fawn-coloured hair to the manipulations of her sleepy maid.

"I shall make all sure by marrying Darrel Moer," she said to herself. "Once his wife, I shall be Lady of Waldemar, whatever happens. Of course there's no real heiress living, and if there were she's probably sunk in peasant obscurity. She's the same as dead. I shall wear the Waldemar diamonds, chaise in society, and be rid of the restrictions Lord Waldemar desires to place upon me. And, once I am Darrel Moer's wife, I can defy Grimrod and Mrs. Watchley. I'll turn them both away, as sure as I live. It's true Grimrod holds those letters of mine to Antonio Frivoli, but I can subdue him if he should attempt to govern me by means of them. My marriage to Darrel Moer means, sooner or later, the dismissal of Grimrod and Mrs. Watchley."

She set her lips together in grim determination. Darrel Moer's musings were tinged with perplexity.

"Something has changed the pretty heiress since I first proposed to her," he thought. "Can she have fallen in love with me? No. Is she anxious to marry me because I can give her freedom? Perhaps. I should think so, if I did not know that under all her seeming shallowness she is really deep and artful and far-seeing. What's her motive? Whatever it is, I'll take advantage of it, and marry, her either with or without Lord Waldemar's consent. Marriage with Hilda Floyd will be a paying speculation for me!"

He opened his door and passed into his room. His valet Bing arose from a couch on which he had been reclining while waiting for his master.

"You can sit down again, Bing," said Moer, closing and locking the door. "I have something important to say to you."

#### CHAPTER XXX.

DARREL MOER'S valet resumed his seat and his easy, reclining attitude. His master flung himself into an easy-chair. The gas-light burned brightly, the fire was aglow. A decanter of brandy, with glasses, was upon the table, in company with a jar of Turkish tobacco and a couple of ruby-coloured meerschaums. Darrel Moer was wont to gratify his appetite, and here was full material for such gratification.

"Shall I fill your pipe, sir?" asked Bing as Moer's glances rested upon the table and its contents.

"No. I have serious business on hand," replied Moer, contracting his brows. "You see in me, Bing, a man who stands at last upon the threshold of success. When I was the supposed heir of Lord Waldemar I was never sure in my soul that I would one day be Baron Waldemar. There was always a secret misgiving within me that my cousin would reappear, or that he would leave a son to oust me. It was, after the first shock, a relief to me that the blow had at last fallen, and that Miss Floyd had put in her claims and been declared my uncle's heiress. She's a pretty girl, and the man who gets her will be lucky. I am to be that favoured individual, Bing. Miss Floyd has promised to become my wife."

Bing expressed his delight in suitable terms—with

emphasis, even, for his employer's prosperity was his own.

"I know you'd win her, sir," he exclaimed. "Somehow the ladies can't resist you, Mr. Moer. When is the marriage to take place?"

"Immediately. Within a month."

"But suppose my lord should object to it?"

"Then I will marry her by stealth, or run away with her."

"There's a lover for you!" cried Bing, admiringly, apostrophizing space. "Then you'll be sure of Waldemar, and the manor, and the rent-rolls, and the bank accounts, and all the rest of them—if only Miss Gint don't come forward, or some of her friends interfere. That Sir Hugh Tregaron is a regular lion. I'm afraid he'll show fight."

"My marriage to Miss Floyd will have to be secret that's certain. Honor has probably blown the whole story to her friends. Sir Hugh would deem it his duty to prevent another marriage on my part before this one is annulled. It's a mercy he hasn't told the whole thing to Lord Waldemar already. They are old friends and quite intimate. My uncle thinks Sir Hugh a very pattern of civility, and all because Sir Hugh's father was his college chum, and played Pythias to his Damon. But as far as I am secure, Lord Waldemar does not know the truth yet, and I must move before he finds it out."

"If we could only find Miss Gint that would be a great step gained," said Bing. "So long as she is in the dark, somewhere we have cause to fear."

"Miss Gint is found. She is visiting here in Park Lane, not far from this very house—in fact, at the house of Sir Hugh Tregaron's aunt, Lady Thaxter. She's there in clover, lying off, I suppose, to watch my movements."

"That is bad," muttered Bing, shaking his head. "She has found powerful friends, and has only to open her mouth to blow down all your fine schemes with your bride and your fortune in them. What is to be done?"

Moer's lips wreathed themselves in a strange smile.

"It is perfectly evident what is to be done," he replied. "The girl is in my way. She has the certificate of my marriage to her in her pocket. She has only to produce it to cause my expulsion from my uncle's house, and to rob me of my rich bride. She is an obstacle in my path. What do we do with obstacles?"

"Remove them. But how are we to remove a young lady who is sheltered in one of the grandest houses in London, is watched over by a noble lady, and guarded by Sir Hugh Tregaron, with a host of servants at his beck and call? The thing is impossible."

"Not so, my good Bing. Set your clever wits to work," said Darrel Moer. "The problem is soon stated. How to get the girl out of Lady Thaxter's house—that's the gist of the thing. I might write her a note, asking her to meet me somewhere," he said, musingly, "and I could tell her I purposed to release her in some way, or get up some plausible excuse that doesn't occur to me now, something that would be sure to bring her. She'd come to me, I daresay—though she might not; but, if she did, she'd bring Sir Hugh Tregaron and Lady Thaxter with her. She won't easily be hoodwinked, and her friends will watch against every possible ruse. Bing, you shall have a share in my prosperity. Help me to win it. Set your shrewd wits to work, as I said before, to devise a plan to get the girl out of the Thaxter house—out of London!"

Bing applied himself to the problem in a dead earnest.

Darrel Moer puzzled himself over the question, knotting his narrow brows.

"Suddenly Bing started, an evil gleam lighting up his face.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "But first tell me something of Miss Gint's disposition. Is she revengeful?"

"No; she is too merciful to be always just," replied Moer, wondering. "I daresay she hates me most cordially, and would be glad to hear of my death, but if I were dying I am sure she would minister to me. She's very near an angel, and I wish she were Lord Waldemar's heiress," and he sighed.

"If she were to hear that Mrs. Gint was dying, and longed to see her before she dissolved, do you think she would go to Bolton?" inquired Bing.

"Certainly. She'd go if she had to make the journey on her hands and knees. But Sir Hugh Tregaron would go too, and Lady Thaxter, and Mrs. Early, her ladyship's companion, and the girl's maid, that Lucky who pulled off your beard. So what good would that do?"

"I think I can manage it," said Bing, reflectively. "I'll start for Bolton in the morning, and send a telegram from there the next forenoon, so that Miss Gint and her friends will arrive at Bolton about dusk. I

have not perfected my plan, so I won't dwell upon it. If there's a spark of tenderness in the girl's heart she'll come on receipt of the telegram I'll send her. Then I must contrive to get her in my power. Once in my hands, where shall I take her? I want a secure place in which to put her."

"You can't keep her at Bolton. Could you find some refuge for her at Manchester or Liverpool? She must be kept shut up somewhere until after my marriage to Miss Floyd, and I will then release her only upon her giving up to me that marriage certificate, and promising never to betray to any one the hand I had in scolding her for a season. If I once get hold of that paper the whole trouble is ended, for without that certificate the girl and all her friends can never prove my marriage to her."

"She would be found by her friends: in either of the places you have named," said Bing. "We must have some spot that is secret and secluded. You said the other day at the manor that Lord Waldemar had cut you off with two hundred a year and a wild, boggy place called the Cyresses. You said also that the house is unoccupied, although furnished, because believed to be haunted. Why would not this place be the very one we want? I have a sister whom I could send on in advance to prepare the house for occupation, and she would remain to take care of the girl. Where is the Cyresses?"

Darrel Moor hesitated for an instant, changing colour.

"In Huntingdonshire," he said, finally, with an effort.

Bing repeated the words in dismay.

"In what part?" he asked.

"In the eastern, among the fens," replied Moor.

"The Cyresses is for the most part fen."

"In the eastern part!" echoed Bing, with a curious glance at his master. "Then that is settled. You won't dare take her there?"

"Why not?" demanded Moor, almost defiantly, his colour rising. "Honor Glink will be too closely shut up to ever learn that Huntingdonshire contains a secret the revelation of which would change entirely her life and mine—yes, and that of Hilda Floyd. I would have the Cyresses located elsewhere if I could, but there's no danger, Bing, not a particle of danger, and you are absurd to suggest such a thing. I have unfortunately a private skeleton of which you and but one or two others suspect the existence. That skeleton happens to be at Huntingdonshire. But it is locked carefully away in a capacious closet, and will never tumble out to my discomfort. Besides, it's a long distance between the closet of my skeleton and the 'Cyresses.' I looked on the map. If the girl is properly guarded—indeed, whether she is or not—she'll never get trace of my secret. She shall go to the Cyresses, Bing. It's a long distance from Lancashire to Huntingdonshire, and I can't see how you'll transport the girl in such a way that she will not be traced."

"Leave that to me," said the valet, quietly. "I shall want plenty of money for my operations. I see my way plainly. I won't say more about my plans, but you will hear by the end of the week that our bird is safely caged. I'll bring you the news along with the marriage certificate."

Moor took out his pocket-book and counted out fifty pounds, which he handed to his valet.

"I'll replenish by borrowing of Grimrod upon my intended marriage with the heiress," he said, smiling. "Grimrod will lend me any amount on an I.O.U. with such security for payment. Very likely Sir Hugh will have detectives after the girl, so you'll have to be wary and shrewd, Bing. I don't see how you are going to manage it. But I have faith in you. You have served me in more difficult cases than this."

Bing stowed the money away on his person.

The worthy pair talked an hour or two longer and then Moor went to bed, and his valet retired to his own room.

The next morning Bing came in to assist his master to dress for breakfast, but went out soon afterward, telling the servants of the household that he was going down to Brighton to see a sister of his who was ill there.

Instead of going to Brighton, however, he took the first mail train to the northward, booking himself to Manchester, at which place he intended to stop an hour to effect a change in his personal appearance.

At an early hour of that morning, also, Mrs. Watchley dispatched a carefully worded telegram to Grimrod, who still lingered in Yorkshire.

It had the effect of causing him to start by the first train for London.

Darrel Moor sought an opportunity throughout the day to broach the momentous question of his desired marriage with Hilda Floyd to his uncle, but Lord Waldemar was invisible to him all the morning, and was busy during the early part of the afternoon writing letters.

At the usual hour of the day—that is, four o'clock

—the carriage, which had been brought from Yorkshire, arrived at the door, and Lord Waldemar, Miss Floyd and Mrs. Watchley entered it and drove to Hyde Park.

Moor mounted a fine thoroughbred which belonged to the baron, and rode beside the carriage, as handsome and smiling a scoundrel as ever set foot in a stirrup.

At six o'clock the family returned home, and at seven they dined.

After dinner the ladies went back to the drawing-room, and Lord Waldemar and his nephew lingered over the wine.

The butler had withdrawn with his staff and the two were quite alone.

"Are you going to the House this evening, my lord?" questioned Moor, trifling with a filbert.

"Yes, there's to be an interesting debate," said the baron. "The Countess of Rothmere, Lady Thaxter, Miss Glink and Tregaron will all be present. I invited Hilda to go, but she thinks she would not be able to keep awake. As it is brains and not bonnets which are to be exhibited, I suppose she would find her entertainment but a dull one."

"She's only a child in many respects, my lord," said Moor, deprecatingly. "but a very pretty one. She has a woman's love for gaiety, but her life has been so secluded at Inusbruck that one cannot wonder at her longing for society. Shall you introduce her this season?"

"No," said his lordship, curtly. "She is too much of a child 'in many respects' to take a woman's place yet in society. She's young enough, Darrel."

"I know it, my lord," responded Moor, uneasily, "but she is old enough to do a great deal of damage to a man's heart. I deemed myself invulnerable," and he laughed a little uneasily, "but I am her first victim."

Lord Waldemar arched his brows incredulously, and a cynical smile curled his lips.

"You are facetious," he remarked. "The idea is more than absurd—it is delightfully grotesque."

Moor flushed with annoyance.

"I assure you, my lord," he exclaimed, "I am in serious earnest. I have fallen in love with my cousin and I desire to marry her. I asked her last evening if she would be my wife and she said yes. Having made myself certain of her sentiments, I come to you to ask your consent to my proposed marriage with Hilda."

"Then this is not some farce gotten up to entertain me?" inquired his lordship, with a faint sneer. "I thought it was. I've a poor opinion of you, Darrel, but the girl I am positive is none too good for you. You and she are kindred souls. But I do not approve your course in making love to her before she has had a chance to compare you with other men, and see if she really loves you. You are in too great haste to bag your game, Darrel. Give her a chance. If at the end of a few years she chooses to marry you I shall not say you nay. My nephew will not be a bad match, 'in many respects'—to quote your expressive phrase—for the daughter of Wallace Floyd and Janet Arlyn."

Moor was greatly encouraged by this reception of his proposal, a reception so much more favourable than he had dared to hope for. He hastened to push his suit.

"I am not so young a man as I was, my lord," he said, "and this desire of yours that we should wait is torture to me. Hilda knows her own heart and I know mine. Why need we delay? I will be a good husband to her, and you will be relieved of her charge. You might bestow upon us a suitable income and permit us to go away by ourselves. Or we would stay with you as long as you live, and be your own children to you."

"I've had one own child, and that will suffice," said the baron, grimly. "I have not been fortunate in my descendants. Now, Darrel, you know you don't love this girl, and that you are after her fortune. Your pretence of love is most ludicrous."

"But I affirm that I do love her, uncle, that I desire to marry her, and I beg you, in her name and my own, to permit our speedy union," persisted Moor.

"It's hard to believe that you love her, although I know that 'like attracts like.' But, granting that you really love her, I cannot consent to the marriage under many years, Darrel. The girl is too young. She may not know her own mind. She is inexperienced and innocent. Give her time to know you as you are."

Moor doggedly reiterated his demand for Hilda's hand.

"I have a right to your consideration, uncle," he said. "I am an honest suitor, and I claim your consideration as if I were a stranger—as if I were Sir Hugh Tregaron."

"Very well. Since you claim to be treated as an ordinary suitor, I will so treat you. If any ordinary

man were to come to me, seeking alliance with my family, I should learn his antecedents. I know all about your family, as you are the child of my own sister, but I don't know all your history since you came to years of manhood. There's been a great deal of mystery in your proceedings which I have not been able to fathom. I must know more about your past before I give my grand-daughter to you as your wife. For instance, that old scandal about you, Darrel. What has become of that pretty actress Carmine Roff, the beautiful German girl who excited all London ten years ago? She suddenly disappeared from the stage, and was seen abroad with you. I heard that at Homburg and Baden-Baden, ten years ago next summer, you introduced her to people as your wife. Where is she?"

Darrel Moor was ghastly pale as he replied, his eyes downcast:

"She is dead!"

"Was she legally your wife?"

Moor did not answer. His suppressed excitement was terrible.

"It will be necessary for me to know the truth before I consent to your marriage with Hilda. I have no desire to force your confidence, Darrel. I have refrained all these years from even questioning you about these reports which came to my ears from various sources, but if you persist in your claim to Hilda's hand, as her only guardian, must know something of your past. Was that German girl—if she was not German she was of German descent—was she legally and truly your wedded wife?"

A cold perspiration sprang to Darrel Moor's forehead. He replied in a nearly inaudible voice:

"Yes, my lord, I loved the girl, and I married her according to law in a registrar's office in London."

"And she is dead?"

"She is dead."

"Where did she die?"

"In Germany. The subject is painful to me, my lord. I loved the girl I so imprudently married, and I mourn her death still. At least, there is a sore spot in my heart when I think of her. She died within a year of our marriage. Remembering my poor cousin's fate, I dared not reveal my misalliance to you; and when Carmine died all necessity for concealment died with her. That is the whole mystery, uncle. I am no unfit suitor, in point of morals, for any lady in the land."

"I am glad to hear it. If Hilda loves you I am willing she should marry you some three years hence—not sooner. Upon this condition, that you will wait quietly the time stipulated, I grant my consent to your betrothal."

From this decision his lordship could not be swayed by any pleading whatever.

"I must be off," he said, at last, arising. "Will you go with me, Darrel?"

"No, my lord. I will remain with Hilda."

Lord Waldemar did not delay. His carriage was waiting, and he set out at once for Westminster, calling at the Thaxter house on his way.

Darrel Moor lingered in the drawing-room until his relative had quitted the house, and then he slowly mounted the stairs, thinking, sullenly:

"He took my proposal easier than I expected. He won't be as relentless to us as he was to Wallace if we contract a hasty and secret marriage. That's the only kind of marriage I dare risk, for fear that Sir Hugh Tregaron might interfere with the story of my marriage to Honor Glink. Hilda shall be my wife within a month, and that secretly. Honor will be out of my way—the certificate destroyed—not a vestige of that mad marriage in existence. Bing must be at Bolton by this time. To-morrow he will spring his trap."

Moor passed through the wide hall to the drawing-room door. As he placed his hand upon the latch the house-knocker and bell were sounded at the same instant, and the hall porter gave admittance to—Grimrod!

The Mephistophelean manager had arrived to take his part in the strange drama.

(To be continued.)

**NORTHERN ETIQUETTE.**—The following is a curious detail of Northern etiquette: The Emperor William is about to return the visits of the sovereigns of Russia and Austria, and amongst the questions of etiquette there is one in which all are not agreed. When the Czar arrived at Berlin the Prussian officers were admitted to kiss his hand, according to very ancient custom. The court of Berlin wished to establish a reciprocity in respect to the Emperor William when he shall visit St. Petersburg, but the Russian officers refuse in the most absolute manner. In that empire the ceremony of kissing hands takes place only once a year, and solely for the empress-dowager and the reigning empress, never for an emperor or any prince whatever.



[A PROPOSAL.]

## EDNA.

"I SAY, Bob, did you hear that?"  
 "Yes, and it was touchingly beautiful. Hark, there it is again!"

The speaker waved his hand toward his companion, and both paused. They were near the margin of a silvan lake—only separated from it by a little thicket. Over the rippling waters, filling the woods with its melody, floated a rich, exquisitely clear voice, whose delicate intonations thrilled the listener to the soul.

"What a face that girl must have!" exclaimed Robert Wynne, drawing a long breath, as if he could imbibe the sweetness of the music.

"That does not follow!" replied Herbert May, practically. "She may be the homeliest creature on the face of the earth!"

"What an absurd idea!" said Wynne, enthusiastically. "Do you suppose a voice like that could live in a coarse or unseemly form? Bah! Nature never contradicts herself in that style!"

"Oh, you're mad! Come on, and see what she's like, and don't stand here raving like a lunatic!" And Herbert laughed in his jovial, careless way.

"You have a poetic soul, my friend," responded Wynne, with quiet sarcasm.

"And an appreciative stomach, which is of far more consequence," said May.

They now reached the verge of the lake, and far out upon its centre they descried a tiny craft, which appeared like a shell under the bright rays of the moon. Gradually it grew larger, the splash of oars sounded on their ears, and they beheld two forms outlined against the sparkling water.

"What did I tell you?" said Wynne, triumphantly. "Even at this distance you can see that her form is perfect, that her head is poised most gracefully."

May rolled up his eyes, placed his arms akimbo, and shook his head ruefully.

"You're a lobster, and green at that!" Wynne laughed in spite of himself—there was something irresistibly comic about May.

Presently the boat drew near the little landing-place and the lady, in hurrying to disembark, was caught in the very awkward and mortifying position of having one foot on the step and the other in the boat.

Wynne sprang forward, threw his arm round her waist, and lifted her to terra firma.

She murmured her thanks in a voice hardly audible, and then, partially turning, awaited, with evident impatience, the coming of her companion.

Having moored the boat, he drew near, muttered something about haste and stupidity, and then gave her his arm.

"He must be a heartless fellow," said Wynne as they disappeared from view. "Did you hear how crossly he spoke to her?"

"Yes, and it was just," rejoined the stolid Herbert.

"Women are always getting out of boats and carriages before they stop. But when you are in a hurry, and want to go somewhere, it takes them about two hours to get ready, and then they've forgotten something—oh, dear."

"Have you sympathy for anybody or anything?"

"Oh, yes."

"What—in the name of all that is beautiful—what?"

"Roast beef and brown stout," replied May, drily.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Wynne, and began beating a bush with his cane.

They walked back to the hotel in silence, these two men, so opposite in their nature, Wynne wondering who the beautiful stranger could be, and if she was married, and the other speculating upon the shooting that might be done in the vicinity.

When they reached the hotel Wynne made inquiries and ascertained that the lady was staying there and that her name was Edna Parker.

These facts he communicated to May with a great deal of gratification, but that undemonstrative gentleman merely bit off the end of a cigar, elevated his eyebrows and ejaculated:

"Indeed!"

Wynne left him in disgust and ran full against a person whom he soon found to be Miss Parker's companion.

"Look here, sir," said the stranger, taking Wynne by the lapel of the coat, "I don't want you to say anything to my sister. She's a little wrong here!"

He tapped his brow significantly.

"Impossible!" stammered Wynne, in mingled sadness and surprise.

"No—fact, sir—fact," iterated the brother, with a long-drawn sigh. "She is only endurable when she is singing! Beautiful voice, sir? Yes, you noticed it—ah, me! Brought her here on the recommendation of physicians. Hope it will do her good; but don't look at her or pay her attention, will you?"

"No," said Wynne, and stopped aside, for there was a glare in the man's eyes that he did not like.

Mr. Parker smiled very brilliantly, and passed on to the billiard-room.

Wynne watched him for a moment, and was inclined to speak to May concerning him, but, not wishing to provoke his sarcasm, he sought to banish the subject from his mind, and started for his chamber.

On his way he met Miss Parker, and he noticed that her face was very pale and wore an expression of deep anxiety.

He endeavoured to avoid her, but she put out her hand and said, hesitatingly:

"Excuse me. I fear you will think me bold, but I have no one to speak to, and I am so oppressed. Have you seen the gentleman who was with me on the lake this evening?"

"I just met him," replied Wynne, wondering if she was really insane.

"Where?" she queried, excitedly.

"Downstairs—"

"Then he is not far off!" she hastily interposed, with a sigh of relief. "Oh, sir, if you will find him, and tell him I want him, I shall be so grateful. I know how strange this request must seem, taken with my manner, but I cannot explain now. I will say this, however—he is not in his right mind. I fear he may do some mischief. I am the only one who can control him. Please go down with me. I will wait in the hall."

"Poor girl, she knows not what she says!" thought Wynne, sympathetically, but answered by smiling pleasantly and starting down the stairs.

She followed him in silence, and paused at the foot of the staircase. He moved on to the billiard-room, where he found the object of his search balancing a cue on his forefinger. Tapping him on the shoulder, Wynne whispered that his sister needed his attention, and the man instantly turned and left the room. Wynne went out by another door, and saw the girl place her arm within that of her reputed brother and gently force him to his chamber. Then Robert returned to May, and repeated to him the singular conduct of these two persons and asked his advice.

"Well, to be honest, Bob, I think you are the biggest lunatic of the three."

This was all the satisfaction he received from the eccentric young doctor.

Somewhat annoyed, Wynne went to his room, put on his slippers, lighted a cigar, and gave himself up to comfort and meditation.

He was singularly interested in Edna Parker, and he could not, or would not, believe her insane. He had argued the matter pro and con ten times, when her voice again sounded on the air, enrolling the same sweet ballad that had entranced him early in the evening.

He looked at his watch. 'Twas nearly midnight. Surely she could not be singing for pleasure, or from any maniacal whim! Ah! he have solved the problem. The man was the lunatic, and she his gentle keeper, soothing his wild fancies by the magic power of her voice. Yet how could that be? But farther conjecture was useless, and, throwing off his clothes, he retired, and was lulled to sleep by those dulcet notes stealing in through the open casement.

The next morning, while enjoying his usual stroll, Wynne came suddenly upon Edna, seated, with her hands pressed to her head.

She started up in affright as she heard his step, and then, smiling somewhat confusedly, said:

"You will pardon me, but I thought it was him. He is dreadfully ill this morning, but I was obliged to look him in, and come out to get a breath of fresh air. I don't know why I speak so freely to you, but I think you have a sensitive, sympathetic nature—and I must speak to somebody."

She sighed wearily.

"I am grateful for your good opinion," replied Wynne, earnestly. "And if I can help you in any way I shall be only too happy. You will not think me impertinent if I ask who this man is, and

how it is that you are burdened with the care of him."

She dropped her eyes, clasped her small white hands in her lap, and seemed to reflect. A moment or two passed, and then she answered:

"I cannot tell you now. I am placed in a very peculiar position. I have suffered much, but I hope it will be over soon; if it is not, however, I shall be compelled to ask assistance from some one."

"That one I hope will be myself. You will not consider it flattery if I say that your voice prepossessed me in your favour, and that I feel a deep solicitude for you?"

She looked up and smiled faintly—but enough to illumine her countenance and reveal its pure, sweet beauty. Then, with a slight shake of her head, she rejoined:

"No, I do not believe you would waste words with one troubled as I am. You can see from the effect it has on me that I am unused to trouble. You cannot dream how strange it all is—but enough."

She arose, moved a few steps in the path that led to the house, and then, pausing abruptly, apprehensively said:

"You will not breathe a word to any human being—except your friend—of my trials. If it should transpire that he is permanently demented, I don't know what I should do. You promise?"

"You have my word of honour."

She murmured her thanks and hurried away.

Wynne watched her until a turn in the path hid her from view, and then walking slowly onward he strove to probe the mystery that cast a cloud over this fair young life.

But conjecture after conjecture was put aside as improbable, and when he gave up the attempt he was even more perplexed than when he began.

Two days passed, during which time he did not once see Edna. The chamber-maid told him that she took her meals in her room, and felt too proud to mix up with the others.

This, then, was the opinion through the house. Well, it was in all respects the best one that could have been formed. Evidently "he" required all her attention, and she was undoubtedly wearing her health away in ministering to his wants.

Once more Wynne consulted May, and, becoming interested, they resolved to relieve Edna at any cost.

"Hush!" said Wynne, raising his hand.

They were in their favourite path towards the lake. As his friend spoke May heard a rustling in the bushes, and the next instant the maniac's head was thrust out, and his sharp teeth gnashed together.

"You've got something for me, haven't you?" said May, smiling.

"You—you?" repeated the poor fellow, working his fingers together. "You are Edna's brother, ain't you?"

"No," responded the young doctor, at a venture, for he hardly knew how to take this keen and acute madman.

"I knew you were not. I wanted to see if you'd say you were. They think I'm crazy, but I ain't—am I?"

"Of course not, my dear fellow," answered May, laughing.

"Ah! you know me. I like you." He started up and grasped the doctor's arm, while the latter eyed him fearlessly. "You know more than all the rest of the world—the spirits tell you things as they do me. I could kill any other man, but not you."

"But what about the letters?" queried the astute May, seeing several in his pocket and taking his cue accordingly.

"Oh, yes! I was going to give them to you—but stop! How did you know it?"

"Spirits told me," replied May, emphatically.

The unfortunate creature danced up and down as these words greeted his ears, and then he threw his arms about the doctor, and hugged him until he bawled for breath, but he appeared pleased, for it would not do to cross the madman in his whims.

"Yes—here they are! all that Ed has written," he said, drawing the missives forth. "She thought that she could bring her father and my father here, and that I'd be packed away somewhere, but no—not I—not I! See, I stole them from the letter-box. I was just going to put them in the lake with a feather to make them sink, but you may have them."

"Thanks. You're sharp, my boy. Won't you come up to my room and smoke a cigar?"

"Yes, I will—two!"

May nodded, and, placing his arm within that of the maniac, they walked quietly along, Wynne silently following.

When the doctor's room was reached the poor fellow was bound so that he could not injure himself or others, and placed in a large, soft chair. Then Wynne took the letters and went to Edna's room. She opened the door as he was about to knock, and at once inquired if he had seen her charge. He replied briefly, and, although she was relieved, there was a sorrow left that he could not account for, rack his brain as hard as he would,

When he showed her the letters she became whiter if possible, and exclaimed, in mingled amazement and horror:

"Oh, what has he done! He has not only intercepted letters from my father to me and from me to my father, but must have written others himself which have caused my father to travel all over the country in search of us. Such is the cunning of this man! Oh, Mr. Wynne, what shall I do?" and she burst into tears.

"I cannot advise until you have told me more."

"True, I ought to have thought of that, but I am so excited. Ten days ago I left home in company with my cousin to come here. He was perfectly well when we started, but on the way he showed signs of approaching insanity, and I of course began to be alarmed. But they passed away again, and I gave the subject no farther thought. We stopped on the road to make a break in the journey and admire the beauties of the country, and when I wished to hurry on Gerald was strangely obstinate, and said we should not move any farther until I became his wife. I knew by his eyes that his mind was again failing him, and my heart sank within me. I tried to get to the door of the house in which we were temporarily residing, but he caught me, and threatened my life if I breathed a loud word. I didn't know how I retained consciousness, but I did, and had sense enough to humour him. He became amiable anon, and I thought the fancy had passed, but, alas! I was in error, for he again threatened my life if I should refuse. I told him to go for a minister, hoping that in the meantime I could escape. But he had provided for all contingencies—the windows were nailed down, and in his hand he held the key of the door, which he was careful to lock when he went out. Let me not dwell on the agony of those moments."

"He had, it appears, previously arranged the preliminaries, and presently he returned with a clergyman and two countrymen as witnesses, and he whispered as he took his place by my side: 'If you breathe a word I will kill you instantly.' I knew he would keep his word, and what could I do? I would not take my own life. I prayed fervently—I threw my whole soul into my prayer, and went through with the ceremony like one in a fearful dream."

"You were not made his wife!" gasped Wynne, turning deathly pale.

"Yes, but let me proceed. Twenty minutes after the service was over he had forgotten it, and declared that I was his sister, and that my brother Walter had died, and he owned his spirit. You cannot imagine what a relief this change in his mania gave me—in it I seemed to see the hand of my Maker. In this delusion he has continued ever since, not once referring to the marriage. The night we arrived here he was quite well, and continued so until you saw us on the lake, and then he became strange again. I have struggled to shield him from observation for the sake of his parents, hoping all the while that my father would come. My great and crushing sorrow now is the feeling that I am legally his wife."

She pressed her hands to her face, and her form quivered.

"Edna—hear me. Do not despond. A mere form will make you free again."

"I know! I know!" she sobbed. "But the publicity—the scandal—the thousand tongues that are ever ready to hurl infamy upon a woman's name! Oh, Heaven! I can almost wish myself dead!"

"Oh, if you knew how those words pain me! Edna, it may be unkind—it may be unmanly, but I cannot let this opportunity slip, lest I should never have another! I love you, I would make you mine. Edna, can I hope?"

He leaned forward and tenderly smoothed her brow.

She withdrew her hands from her face, and a soft brilliancy crept over it.

For a moment she was silent, and then she hesitatingly answered:

"I acknowledge I have learned to love you—"

"Thank Heaven," he rapturously interposed.

"And when I am free, if my father offer no objection, I will be your wife."

He took her hands within his own and held them for a moment, while the love that his lips could not do justice to shone from his eyes.

"A letter for Miss Parker!" said a servant.

Wynne arose, received it, and passed it to Edna. She broke the seal, hastily read the words therein, and uttered an exclamation of blended joy and astonishment.

"What is it, darling?" queried Robert.

She handed him the missive, while a soft, happy light shone in her dark eyes, and a brilliant smile irradiated her face.

He took the letter with a strange eagerness, and read the following, first observing from the date that it must have been written immediately after the marriage ceremony had been performed between Edna and her cousin, but from some cause it must have been delayed in its transmission:

"MISS PARKER.—Judging from the agitation you displayed while I was performing the marriage ceremony, I conclude that you are unaware of the fact that I am not and never was in holy orders—consequently the marriage is null and void. I consented to officiate to humour the whim of one who is evidently suffering under mental derangement."

"Yours very respectfully,

"JOHN WALLBRIDGE."

"It is like a romance!" mused Wynne, slowly folding the letter. "I can hardly realize that your letters have been removed."

Edna did not reply, for the door softly opened and a form met her gaze that caused her heart to bound with gladness.

"Oh, father!"

She sprang from her chair, and fell into his arms like a weary child. He held her in his breast, smoothed her glossy hair, and gently kissed her brow and cheeks.

The first transport of their meeting over, she gave him an outline of her experience, and then introduced him to Robert Wynne.

Shortly after Robert Parker, Edna's brother, entered, and the party became very merry, but Wynne thought it was not complete without May, so that gentleman was sent for, and at once became a favourite.

A dinner—the best the house could afford—was served an hour later, and, although the physical was well attended to, the mental was not forgotten, May's jokes and dry witticisms being received with gusto, especially by Mr. Parker, Sen., who was a very jolly old gentleman.

Wynne, as lovers usually are, was impatient to have his prospects definitely settled, feeling that as long as one doubt remained his hopes were momentarily liable to be crushed.

Winter, cold, blustering winter has come.

In an elegantly furnished room in the old Wynne mansion sat Edna Wynne. Occasionally she glanced at the marble clock on the mantelpiece, and murmured softly to herself as if each repetition gave her fresh gladness:

"Robert will be home now—it is almost four."

Punctual to the hour her husband entered, and having received his kiss of welcome, which had not been discontinued although they had been married six whole months, he moved up to the fireplace, and repeated to her certain parts of the day's business which he knew would interest her, not omitting to add that he had received news of the death of Gerald Walton and the marriage of Herbert May.

J. B.

## ROBERT RUSHTON'S DESTINY.

### CHAPTER XXX.

THE arrival of Captain Rushton, confidently supposed to be dead, produced a great sensation in Millbury, and many were the congratulatory visits received at the little cottage.

Mrs. Rushton was doubly happy at the unexpected return of her husband and son, and felt for the first time in her life perfectly happy. She cared little for poverty or riches as long as she had regained her chief treasures.

When Captain Rushton called upon Mr. Davis the latter received him with embarrassment, knowing that the captain was aware of his intended dishonesty.

He tried to evade immediate payment, but on this point his creditor was peremptory.

He had no farther confidence in Mr. Davis, and felt that the sooner he got his money back into his own hands the better.

It was fortunate for him that Mr. Davis had been at last successful in speculation, or restitution would have been impossible. As it was he received his money in full, and at once invested it in reliable quarters, from which he could derive a good annual income.

Only the day after the payment of this sum a committee of investigation appointed by the directors, whose suspicions had been excited, visited the factory, and subjected the manager's books to a thorough scrutiny.

The result showed that Mr. Davis, in whom hitherto perfect confidence had been felt, had for years pursued a system of embezzlement, which he had sustained by false entries in his books, and had appropriated to his own use about five thousand pounds belonging to the company.

While this investigation was pending Mr. Davis disappeared, leaving his wife and son unprotected for.

His estate was seized in part satisfaction of the amounts he had appropriated, and Halbert's pride was brought low.

The wealth and position upon which he had based his aristocratic pretensions vanished, and in bitter mortification he found himself reduced to poverty.

He could no longer flaunt his cane and promenade

the streets in kid gloves, but was glad to accept a position in the factory, where he was compelled to dress according to his work.

In fact he had exchanged positions with Robert, who was now, owing to a circumstance which will at once be mentioned, possessed of considerable inheritance.

The old farmer, John Nichols, whom Robert tried to defend from his unprincipled nephew, Ben Haley, died suddenly of heart disease. Speculation was rife as to who would inherit the estate which he left behind him. He had no near relation except Ben Haley, and so great was the dislike he entertained toward him that no one anticipated that the estate would go to him, unless through John's dying intestate. But shortly after Haley's visit his uncle made a will, which he deposited in the hands of Mr. Paine. On the day after the funeral the latter met Captain Rushton and Robert, and said:

"Will you come to my office this afternoon at three o'clock?"

"Certainly," said the captain.

"I suppose you don't want me, Mr. Paine?" said Robert.

"I do want you particularly," said the lawyer. Our hero wondered a little why his presence was required, but dismissed the matter from his mind until three o'clock found him in the lawyer's office.

"Gentlemen," said the lawyer, "I am about to read the last will and testament of our neighbour John Nichols, recently deceased."

This preamble created surprise, for this was their first intimation that such a will was in existence.

The document was brief, and the substance of it was contained in the following paragraph:

"Having no near relatives, except Benjamin Haley, for whom I have neither regard nor affection, and who, moreover, has recently stolen a considerable sum of money from me, I leave all of which I may die possessed, whether in land or money, to my brave young friend, Robert Rushton, who courageously defended me from my said nephew at his own bodily risk, and I hope he may live long to enjoy the property I bequeath him."

No one was more surprised than Robert at the unexpected inheritance. He could hardly realize that he was now possessed of a considerable property in his own right. It may be said here that, including the value of the farm, and the gold concealed, his inheritance amounted to quite two thousand pounds. John had considerably supplied the lawyer with a list of the hiding-places where he had secreted his money, on the strictest injunctions of secrecy, and this made the task of finding it quite easy.

Congratulations poured in upon our hero, who received them with modest satisfaction.

"It is a good thing to have a rich son," said Captain Rushton, humorously. "Robert, I hope you won't look down upon me on account of my comparative poverty."

"Father," said Robert, "I wish you would take this money—I don't want it."

"I shall do nothing of the kind, Robert. It is fairly and deservedly yours, though I confess you may attribute it partly to good luck, for virtue is not always so well rewarded in this world. I will take care of it for you, and if you choose to pay your own expenses out of your income I shall allow you to do so, since you are now rich and prosperous."

"You must take all the income, father. Then it will not be necessary for you to go to sea again."

"I have already made up my mind to stay on land hereafter," said Captain Rushton. "My cruise in an open boat without provisions has cured me of my love for the sea. With the little money I have saved, and the help of a rich son, I think I can afford to stay on shore."

The cottage was enlarged by the erection of another storey, as well as by the addition of a wing, and the throwing out of two bay windows, and was otherwise refitted and so metamorphosed by fresh paint and new furniture that it became one of the most attractive houses in Millbury.

Captain Rushton, who knew something of agriculture, decided to carry on Robert's farm himself, and found the employment both pleasant and profitable.

"My only trouble," he used to say, jocosely, "is that I have a very exacting landlord. Unless the rent were punctually paid, he would be sure to resort to legal means to recover it."

When Ben Haley heard that his uncle's estate had been bequeathed to the boy whom he had persecuted, and whom for that reason he hated, his rage and disappointment were unbounded.

If he had not been within two hours of sailing in command of a ship bound for South America, he would at once have gone down to Millbury, and in his fury he might have done serious injury to the boy who had superseded him. But he could not delay the day of sailing, and so, much against his will,

he was forced to forego his vengeance until his return. But this was destined to be his last voyage. When at Rio Janeiro he became engaged in a fracas with the keeper of a low grog-shop, when the latter, who was a desperate ruffian, snatched a knife from his girdle and drove it into the heart of the unhappy captain, who fell back on the floor and expired without a groan.

Thus terminated a misguided and ill-spent life. We should have been glad to report Ben Haley's reformation instead of his death, but, for the sake of Robert, whom he hated so intensely, we are relieved that this source of peril is closed.

Robert, being now in easy circumstances, decided to pursue his studies for two years longer, and accordingly placed himself in a school of high reputation, where he made rapid improvement.

He then entered upon a business life, under the auspices of his friend Mr. Morgan, and promises, in time to become a prominent and wealthy merchant.

He passes every Sunday at home in the little cottage occupied by his father, who, however, has ceased to be a farmer, having been promoted to the post in the factory formerly occupied by Mr. Davis.

For the first twelve months the post was filled by a new man, who proved to be incompetent, and then was offered to Captain Rushton, whose excellent executive talents were well known.

He soon made himself familiar with his duties, and the post is likely to be as long as he cares to hold it.

Hester Paine, as a young lady, fulfils the promise of her girlhood.

The mutual attachment which existed between her and Robert when boy and girl still continues, and we have reason to think that there is some ground for the report which comes to us from Millbury—that they are engaged.

The alliance will be in the highest degree pleasing to both families, for, if Hester is fair and attractive, Robert is energetic and of excellent principles, and possessed of precisely those qualities which with fair good fortune will, under the favour of Providence, insure his success in life.

His trials had come in the season of youth.

Now the future lies before him under unclouded skies, and we are sure all our readers will unite in wishing for him a happy and prosperous career.

THE END.

THE *Record* says that the refusal of a majority of the Town Council of Inverness to confer on the Chancellor of the Exchequer the freedom of the town is attributed to a speech of his at Glangary House, reported by a lady, that he thought the Caledonian Canal ought to be disestablished, and a good railway substituted for such very antiquated and barbarous modes of travelling.

AN ANCIENT CARP.—Those who have visited the Palace of Fontainebleau will remember the wonderful collection of enormous carp, many of them gray and hoary with age, and one or more of them blind, in the canal of the park; some of these creatures are declared to be more than 400 years old. A carp was killed the other day at Chantilly by a huge pike, and the following extraordinary account concerning it is related in the *Gazette* of Paris:—"It was the oldest carp in the world, being 475 years of age, and belonged to M. G., the proprietor of a fine property at Chantilly. It was an historical carp, a carp which was born at the Comte de Cosse's, in the time of Francois I.; it had passed through various fortunes, having had no less than thirty-two masters. M. G. purchased it a year since for 1,300 francs. The name of the carp was Gabrielle, and it measured nearly 29½ inches round and 38½ inches in length." Certainly this carp affords one of the most extraordinary instances of longevity and pugnacity combined that was ever recorded; to be killed in combat at the age of 475 is indeed rare, even in story.

GIPIRES IN PARIS.—A band of gipires which has just taken up its abode on some vacant ground in the Rue Duchesse, Paris, lately had a marriage celebrated between two of their tribe. The bride was about twenty-five, with three horribly dirty children, and the bridegroom a little older, one of those so well-known types with bronzed visages and long black hair. In fact the ceremony was only the legitimization of a union which had long existed. The chief blessed the two spouses in the presence of the band and the spectators; and, after an address, a pitcher was smashed, and the pieces thrown to the four cardinal points. The several caravans encamped in Paris have been ordered to go and plant their tents outside the fortifications, as they showed not only a propensity for but a strange aptitude in pilfering. The recent marriage of one of the tribe has been followed by a death. Four men were seen bearing a beautiful young girl out of one of the tents. She was almost as dark and swarthy as a

Nubian, yet through the midnight of her hair the gleams of approaching death were but too plainly visible. The Bohemians said that she was dying, they had tried to save her, but without hope of success. The chief of the tribe, the very picture of Scott's Hayreidin Ma-grabin, brought forth a bird from the tent, put it to the dying girl's lips, and then let it fly away. He explained this as being the custom of the tribe; the bird was supposed to receive the soul of the dying girl, and thus charged would fly with it to heaven. The poor girl expired a few minutes after the bird had sped on its way heavenwards.

## FACETIE.

If speech is silver, and silence is gold, how much is a deaf and dumb man worth?

If a toper and a quart of whisky were left together, which would be drunk first?

## A DIG AT A FIG.

Farmer: "Well, mum, if ye want a pig o' my own breed—there he is!"—*Fun.*

A BRIGHTON belle has hair that reaches nearly to the ground. This flower of fashion might therefore be appropriately called a hare-bell.

INDIVIDUALS bearing the same surname are forbidden to marry in China. Fancy a similar prohibition applied to our Smiths, Browns, and Joneses!

## CONCERT BY A CABMAN.

They say you should put by somethin' agin a rainy day. But that ere's the warty time wen I takes most money.—*Punch.*

BENDING TO CIRCUMSTANCES.—Potatoes will be scarce during the coming winter; let us hope it may have the happy effect of taking some of the starch out of the numerous family of the Stuckups.—*Fun.*

A VERY self-sufficient and foolish M. P. said one day to a lady, "I should certainly have succeeded rapidly and brilliantly if my absurd modesty—" When the lady interrupting him said, "Remember the good old rule, never to speak ill of the absent."

## "STRIKE HOME!"

Baker: "No baking to-day!"

Working Man: "What! you on strike too! No Sunday baking, and no bread!—then, what's to become of me and my dinner; I should like to know!"—*Punch.*

OUTDONE.—An enterprising soap-maker in New York daubed the rocks all the way up the Hudson with the appeal, "Use Smith's Soap," whereupon his rival, the still more enterprising Jones, after much cogitation, started his whitewasher up the river to append to each of Mr. Smith's appeals: "if you can't get Jones's."

"WATERLOO."—An amusing story has been going the round of the Wiltshire camp. A London volunteer, seeing a man in his own uniform, and mistaking him for a comrade, hallooed, "When did you leave Waterloo?" "Leave Waterloo!" said the astonished Rifle Brigade man, "sure I never was in the battle at all."

SCIENTIFIC JOTTING.—A distinguished chemist has made the remarkable discovery that the cattle disease is owing to the prevalence in the atmosphere of a noxious principle, which also constitutes the cause of the strike epidemic. This element is imponderable, and its presence is indicated only by the effects it produces on unthinking creatures.—*Punch.*

EFFECT OF A VOTE.—A local paper says that at the North Wilt election some time ago a voter who resides in a small country town not far from Corsham was applied to several times for his vote. This, however, he absolutely refused to give—"For," said he, "directly after I voted the last time the bread rose, and I made up my mind from that time that I'd never vote any more."

A ONE-SIDED VIEW.—"Jack"—was called up by the schoolmaster to account for his possession of some apples "says a biographer of an eminent lawyer deceased. "The apples," said our hero, "were Tom's, and I don't know how he got them; and now they're mine, and he doesn't know how I got them." The biographer in raptures says, "This evinced the future great lawyer." What did it?—taking the apples, eh, biographer?

AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.—A young man had a lady friend who was the fortunate possessor of a half-dozen gold-fish. He went fishing one day and caught a pound trout. He preserved it alone, thinking it would be a nice companion for gold-fish, and concluded to surprise the young lady by putting it into the aquarium while she was away. The surprise was complete, for the trout swallowed all the gold-fish and then calmly turned over on its dorsal fin and died of indigestion.

A LITTLE ANECDOTE FOR AMATEUR AUTHORS.—A would-be author was advised to try the effect of one of his compositions on the folks at home,

without confessing its authorship. His mother fell asleep, his sister groaned, and his brother asked him to shut up, as they had had quite enough of shower of words without wit, and at last his wife tapped him upon the shoulder, with the sweetest possible "Won't that do?" He then saw how it was himself, buried his portfolio, recovered his digestion, and has been a happy man ever since.

**SOMETHING TO INSURE REMEMBRANCE.**—An American girl being asked if she had not been engaged to "a party by the name of Jackson, who was at the time a Harvard student," languidly replied, "I remember the circumstance perfectly, but I am not certain about the name." They are not smart in America. An English girl would have remembered the party, thus—*Girl v. Jackson*. Breach of promise case, damages 1,000*l*.

**A MASHBOWLS JOKE.**—A funny mistake, says the *Baltimore Courier*, occurred lately in printing labels for a meat-preserving company, whose operations are carried on in the Lake country. The printer had been in the habit of labelling tins of beef or mutton, as the case might be, with the words "without bone," prominently displayed. The company having added kidney soup to its already ample cuisine, the new condiment was duly notified as "kidney soup—without bone." Those labels did not go to London.

**STOPPING THE INTEREST.**—A good story is told of a gentleman dining with a merchant. A dusty old bottle of wine had been carefully decanted, and a glass filled. "Now, you can't guess what that coat me?" said the host. "Surely not. I only know that it is excellent." "Well, now, I can tell you, for I made a careful estimate the other day. When I add the interest to the first price I find that it cost me the sum of just eight shillings per glass!" "Good gracious! you don't say so!" said the gentleman; and then, draining his glass, he hastily presented it again, with the remark, "Fill up again as quick as you can, for I want to stop that confounded interest."

**THE APPEAL ANSWERED.**—Those who go round with the contribution-box in Californian churches plead and argue the case in the pews as they go along. The following dialogue, it is said, took place between one of these gentry and an honest-looking miner. Parson L— extended the box to Bill, who slowly shook his head. "Come, William, give something," said the parson. "Can't do it," said Bill. "Why not? Is not the cause a good one?" "Yes, good enough; but I am not able to give anything," answered Bill. "Pooh! pooh! I know better; you must give me a better reason than that." "Well, I owe too much money; I must be just before I am generous, you know." "But, William, you owe your Maker a larger debt than any one else." "That's true, parson, but He ain't pushing me like the rest of my creditors."

#### MILK, OH!

The milkman's mind, like the dyer's hand, would seem apparently "subdued to that it works in." In two cases lately its utterances have displayed a laudable mildness, and a clearness, which we cannot altogether dissociate from pump-water. In the first instance all the dairymen of Sheffield raised the price of its milk, because, as it ingeniously argued, the Adulteration Act would compel folk to do without water in their pails. The other instance will be found in the following advertisement:—

A lad wanted, to undertake the management of a dairy. Most of the milk is sold as drawn from the cow. Must be able to milk and write, and must thoroughly understand poultry.—Apply by letter, etc.

"Most of the milk is sold as drawn from the cow" is a candid admission! It would be more satisfactory if the colour of the cow were stated, and it did not prove to be "the black cow," which is drawn from; as that animal could possibly reveal an unvarnished tail—of iron. The allusion to poultry induces us to inquire whether most of the eggs are sold as derived from the hen; because, "as sure as eggs is eggs," milk is milk—and not milk-and-water.—*Fun.*

**DURING** a recent thunderstorm at Lucerne the lightning shattered one of the forefeet of the celebrated lion of Thorwalden.

**ANECDOTE OF LORD BATHURST.**—At an early period of his life Lord Bathurst inquired of an old Bishop of Ely what was his secret for insuring longevity. "Your question is too general, my lord," replied the prelate; "but if you will ask me any particular question I will give you a specific answer." "Then as to eating, my lord," said Lord B. "Why, my lord, I eat what I like, and as much as I like." "Next, as to drinking." "Why, with regard to drinking, my lord, I observe precisely the same rule; I drink what I like, and as much as I like." "Excellent rules!" replied Lord B. "which I am determined punctually to follow." Lord B did follow these rules to hilarity, but rarely to intemperance, and he lived to the advanced age of ninety-one. Another

rule which his lordship invariably pursued contributed, doubtless, much more to the prolongation of his life than the epicurean code of the Bishop of Ely. This was bodily exercise in riding and walking, with which he suffered neither pleasure nor business to interfere, and which he habitually practised till within a short time of his death. For this practice, after his retirement from public life, he had great facilities in the extensive and various walks in his ample domain at Cirencester. In the autumn of the year 1775 a slight disease occurred in one of his knees, and, being unable on account of this to take his accustomed exercise in the open air, he seems to have determined, like Attilius, to cease to live.

#### HELP THE WEARY ON THEIR WAY.

It is a simple thing to give

A kindly word, a cheering smile,

To those who in misfortune live,

Whose days no pleasures e'er beguile;

And better far it is to bless

Than heed not sorrow or distress.

Happy the man who hath the power,

And hath the will, to uphold the weak—

To aid the poor in darkest hour.

And words of sympathy to speak;

For he in all the grateful land

Among the best beloved shall stand.

There is no nobler one than he

In all the world; nor can be found

More natural nobility

Than that which his pure life has

crowned

With acts of love, with goodly deeds,

Which bravely meet misfortune's needs.

Misers we find where'er we turn,

Cold-hearted men who worship self,

Who every noble prompting spur,

Whose god is gold, whose joy is pelf;

But though his coffers groan with weight,

Vain is the miser's vast estate.

Riches are good when rightly used,

To elevate and bless the race;

Riches are evil when abused,

And gained to purchase power and

place;

Wealth is a glorious thing to own

When garnered not for self alone.

So let us strive the best we may

To aid all fainting souls along,

And lead them out into the day

From darkness so they may grow

strong;

And for our willing sacrifice

We'll win the love that never dies. C. D.

#### GEMS.

In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labour to subvert religion and morality, those great pillars of human happiness, those firmest props of the duties of men and citizens.

**THE MAN AND HIS SHADOW.**—A shadow that, like all empty things, was insensibly vain of its importance, was one day excessively mortified and indignant at seeing a certain man always walking before it and getting in its way on all occasions. Many a time and oft did it mend its pace and try to pass him, and more than once attempt to approach and knock him down. But somehow or other the man always kept before the shadow, so that it could never come near enough to accomplish the object. At length it got quite out of patience, and prayed to Jupiter to be revenged on this troublesome person. Jupiter, willing to punish its presumption, suddenly snatched up the man to the skies, and at the same moment the shadow was annihilated for ever. "Alas!" said the aspiring shadow, "I am revenged at the expense of my own life! Out of pique I have sacrificed him to whom I owed my existence! Thus it is that people often bring down ruin on their own heads in attempting to revenge themselves on others."

#### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**WARM BATH IN INSANITY AND IN BURNS.**—Dr. Wilkins in his official report to the California Legislature, on insanity, refers to the warm bath as a favourite method of treatment in Italy, and in some parts of Holland and France. He states that he often saw a dozen patients in one bath-room, with their heads alone in sight, the bathing-tub being covered, except a hole for the head; there they usually remain from one to three hours, in some instances six to eight hours, and occasionally for days at a time. Dr. Gudden, of Zurich, kept a man thus immersed for five days, on account of a high state of

excitement connected with bed-sores. The patient is represented to have slept well a portion of the time, and to have been cured of the sores, no exhaustion or ill consequences following. The case is also related of a man scalded by steam, and not insane, who was placed by Hebra in a tepid bath and kept there for three weeks, until a new epiderm had formed over the entire surface; the water was kept at an agreeable temperature, and the patient recovered without inconvenience.

#### STATISTICS.

**IRON AND COAL IN THE UNITED STATES.**—It is proposed to throw a great bridge over the Hudson river at Poughkeepsie. The bridge will be composed of five spans of 500 feet each, and it will be 120 feet in height. It will connect New England with the coal fields of Pennsylvania. The directors of the Central Railroad of New Jersey state that the movement of coal over the central division of the system amounted last year to 1,877,064 tons, as compared with 1,289,249 tons in 1866, 823,214 tons in 1861, and 131,995 tons in 1856. The directors add that the relaying of the road with steel rails is steadily advancing month by month. On the first of January 451 miles of single track had been relaid, and the rails for 12 miles more were on hand, while orders for 15 miles more were in course of execution. For the present year, in addition to the above, 8,500 tons of steel rails have been ordered, sufficient to relay 85 miles of road. The steel rails have given perfect satisfaction, while the iron rails recently received from American works, where not composed of re-rolled iron, have been lasting much better. By purchase or lease through the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company or otherwise, the Central Railroad Company of New Jersey now owns the fee or controls the traffic of 21,500 acres of the best coal lands in the Lehigh and Wyoming coal fields.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

The death is announced of M. Charles Duran, one of the ablest enamellers on gold in France.

A MAN named William Webb, of New Buildings, Frome, died on the 18th ult., at the extraordinary age of 105.

MR. STANLEY has been offered, and has accepted, the sum of 10,000*l*. to deliver a course of lectures in the United States, describing his discovery of Dr. Livingstone.

THE popular superstition that overturning the salt is unlucky originated in a picture of "The Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci, in which Judas Iscariot is represented as overturning the salt.

THINKERS are 1,450 hunchbacks in Paris; 1,100 persons with only one arm; 1,200 with only one leg; 150 legless, or moving along in a sort of bowl on wheels; 4800 blind.

THE death is recorded, at the age of 88 years, of Wm. Scott, the celebrated Tweedside fisherman. The old man has left behind him four generations of descendants, having had 9 sons and a daughter, 50 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

PARIS is now suffering from a plague of small brown ants; they are not "ephemeral" like the "Prussian flies" that visited us during the spring; they are resolute, and the last idea they appear to have is that of going away. Some say they are a sign of good luck; others think that they are strange "autumn manoeuvres."

IT appears from a statement in a Russian journal that the number of periodicals published in the Empire of Russia is 337. Of these 286 reviews and journals are in the Russian language, 189 being published in St. Petersburg, 30 in Moscow, and 147 in other towns. There are 40 publications in Polish, 6 in French, 30 in German, 4 in Lettish, 5 in Esthonian, 2 in Finnish, and 3 in Hebrew.

**IRISH CONDENSED MILK.**—The Admiralty has just accomplished a piece of "justice to Ireland" which cannot but bear good fruit in that country. The order has gone out that the condensed milk prepared at Mallow is so superior to all other kinds that it is to be henceforth used in the Navy; 20,000 cans have already been despatched to the Marines from Ireland within the past few days.

**ANOTHER WONDERFUL CAVE.**—A Tennessee paper gives an account of the discovery of a cave in Perry County in that State, festooned with "rock ice," which can be used for all the purposes of ice, but does not melt. The paper says:—"A number of persons have since visited this wonderful cave, and carried off portions of this rock, which they are using for all the purposes of ice, and it sustains no diminution in bulk or loss of coldness. Strange and improbable as all this may seem, yet it can be certified to by numbers of our best citizens."

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. M.—The handwriting is very good.

EMMA M.—The announcement contains a palpable error and cannot be inserted.

J. M. R.—"White's Guide to the Civil Service," published by Wares and Co., price half-a-crown, can be recommended.

FRED and his three friends should each state their wishes separately. The volumes we believe are bound in cloth lettered in an ordinary style.

HANDY.—Some sort of description of personal appearance is requisite, the fuller the better. Your note is altogether silent on this point.

HELENA, TOMMY and NANCY.—The replies should each have been written on a separate piece of paper. The attention to this rule has prevented their insertion.

H. F. E.—Perhaps as an exhibition of a free and flourishing style of penmanship the writing may be pronounced good, but it may also be estimated to be too fantastical to be useful.

A. E.—Your arithmetical exercise demonstrating the answer to the young lady's age is correct, but under the circumstances we do not consider it necessary to print the method by which you have arrived at the result on this page.

LALLA ROOKE.—We have literally complied with a portion of your request; for the rest, it is desirable that we should give you full scope for the exercise of some of that ingenuity which is one of the peculiar characteristics of lovers.

DRAM.—The name is not only unattractive but sufficient to frighten any young lady who is unacquainted with its possessor. Lizzie is of this opinion and immediately eliminated the missive bearing this signature from the many offers she received.

LOVING ANNIE should be advised to reconsider her determination and postpone for two or three years at least her notions of marriage. A great many useful things calculated to promote her future happiness can be learned during that time; in her present state of inexperience marriage and misery will be synonymous terms.

H. B.—We know of no small work on the subject of mixing colours for house painting; and suggest, if you have not served an apprenticeship to the trade, that you should purchase your colours ready mixed of an oilman. Upon the higher branches of the Art of Painting, "Field's Grammar of Colouring," price two shillings, can be recommended.

EDITH S.—To so many accomplishments and other potent attractions it is to be desired that a little patience should be superadded; for with the opportunities you possess you are much more likely to find your heart's desire within your own circle or in those spheres which revolve immediately around it than you will acquire what you are in search of "farther afield."

GEORGE W.—Perhaps the most appropriate reply to a suitor who places, as you have done, not only his personal defects but his "fears" in a conspicuous place before the lady of his love, is the celebrated Queen's answer to Sir W. Raleigh's tremulous writing in her presence—"Fain would I climb but that I fear to fall."

Upon which Her Majesty said:

"If thy heart fall then, why then climb at all?"

K. S. U.—Ladies generally consider that a man under the age of twenty-one is not very well able to sustain the duties of married life, and as little think seriously of entrusting their happiness to the keeping of such a one as they would place their precious lives in the care of a boatman who could not swim. "L. L." has been advised that the age of her intended husband should be at least twenty-five.

SARAH B.—Although the appearance of your letter might have been improved if greater attention had been paid to the manner by which words are usually spelled in this present year of grace, still the letter itself is a very sensible production and well calculated to produce the effect the writer had in view but for a small but important oversight. You have left us quite in the dark as to the name of the worthy fellow upon whom you have fixed your choice.

MAUDIE.—The handwriting is very nice. A good application for the teeth is:—one ounce of myrrh in fine powder, two spoonfuls of the best honey, and a little sage in fine powder mixed together, with which rub the teeth and gums night and morning. With regard to the lover we have inserted one response to the lucky fellow whom you evidently preferred before all others. Is it necessary to add that upon your decided preference for another being made known to the gentleman with the blue

eyes he became and continues to be exceedingly melancholy?

X. Y. Z.—To clean unvarnished paint put upon a plate some of the best whiting, have ready some clean warm water and a piece of flannel, which dip into the water and squeeze nearly dry; then take as much whiting as will adhere to it, apply it to the paint, when a little rubbing will instantly remove any dirt or grease; wash well off with water, and rub dry with a soft cloth. Paint thus cleaned looks equal to new; and, without doing the least injury to the most delicate colour, it will preserve the paint much longer than if cleaned with soap; and it does not require more than half the time usually occupied in cleaning.

J. P. M. (South Shields).—1. An artist's varnish for pictures can be made by the admixture of three pounds of the powdered resin named copal with two pounds of powdered glass. The use of the powdered glass is to separate the particles and so to allow the resin to be fused at a moderate heat. To the above ingredients three quarts of hot clarified oil are poured in and boiled until the mixture strings freely between the fingers; it is then thinned with five quarts of old turpentine; afterwards it is strained and kept in an open jar exposed to air and light until of sufficient age for use. 2. A jeweller's solder is frequently made of four parts of silver, three of copper and one of bismuth.

SAYS DENNY.—We despair of being able to instruct you in this place how to form the vulcanic framework in which artificial teeth are frequently embedded, and we very much question whether mere book knowledge on the subject would enable you to arrive at the result which is obtained by personal practical instruction in the art. Broadly to state that the vulcanized caoutchouc having been dissolved is poured into a mould accurately prepared for its reception, and afterwards hardened by a sort of baking process, will not supply the manual dexterity or the mental perception imparted to a patient apprentice by a master interested in his pupil's progress.

## THE HUNGER.

There is a hunger of the frame,  
Fed to preserve the mortal frame  
Till frame and spirit part:  
Without it where the triumphs hars  
For man upon his natal sphere,  
In hall or field or mart?  
There is a hunger of the mind  
To know all through creation shrined,  
Till in another clime:  
Without it where the glory wrought  
Within humanity by thought  
So fed and made sublime?  
There is a hunger yet, how vast  
Within the present as the past,  
And never more to die:  
That of all hungers oftener craves,  
Unbound by flame or earth or waves;  
That has the tenderest desires,  
And in its secret of fire  
Yearns for the very sky:  
Without it how could be no grace  
With strength, no real human face,  
For love would brutal be;  
Impossible for aught divine,  
No heaven, no sense of right, no shrine,  
One dark, fierce, weltering sea.  
Bless Heaven for this hunger—bless  
That in its boundless tenderness  
All can have deathless part!  
'Twas fed through all the centuries long,  
And must be while the latest throng:  
And answered perfectly will be  
By love's and friendship's ministry  
When dweller in sterility—  
The hunger of the heart! W. R. W.

MAY FLOWER, twenty-five; tall, fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondent must be dark and an officer, about thirty or thirty-five, loving but stern.

FRANCES K., twenty-one, tall, fair, genteel, domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, fond of home, quiet, and religiously inclined.

N., twenty-one, a domestic servant, fair, well educated, wishes to marry a young man who is good tempered, lively, and tall, as "N" is above the medium height.

G. A. H., twenty-five, tall, well built, good looking, of a good family, but no fortune, is desirous to marry. Respondent should be loving and a lady of means.

TOM, eighteen, 5ft. 6in., dark hair, blue eyes, wishes to marry a young lady, good looking, domesticated, careful, and loving; one fond of music would be preferred.

BILL W., twenty-three, tall, considered handsome, and loving. Respondent must be tall, well educated, and about twenty-one.

KATE, twenty-three, tall, dark, and pretty. Respondent must be about twenty-five, good looking, and in a good business.

FOLLY, twenty, medium height, rather stout, has light-brown hair, and is loving. Would like to correspond with a young man who is tall, handsome, and able to make a wife comfortable.

RICHARD J., twenty-two, 5ft. 10in., dark-brown eyes, fair complexion, loving, and in a small business. Respondent must be about eighteen, tall, dark, good figure, and fond of children.

ALICE, twenty, average height, dark complexion and loving. Respondent must be about twenty-four, tall, handsome, loving, fond of music and children, and able to keep a wife.

EVERETT, eighteen, tall, rather fair, dark hair and eyes, loving, domesticated, and good tempered. Respondent must be good looking, tall, and fond of home; a draper preferred.

LOUIE, eighteen, tall, fair, brown hair and eyes, very loving, and domesticated; wishes to marry a young man about twenty-three, who is loving and fond of home; an Englishman preferred.

VIOLET would like to marry a gentleman about twenty-

eight, tall, well educated, and fond of music; she is a widow without children, age twenty-three, dark-brown hair and eyes, loving and affectionate.

JACK GIATTO, twenty-three, 5ft. 5in., dark complexion, blue eyes, brown hair, and belonging to the Royal Navy, would like to marry a respectable young woman about his own age; a domestic servant preferred.

J. M., twenty-one, tall, a seaman in the Royal Navy, dark hair, gray eyes, ruddy complexion, wishes to marry a respectable young woman who is a domestic servant of his own age and tall.

M. W. J., thirty, 6ft. 6in., good looking, wishes to marry a widow from twenty-five to thirty; she must be good tempered and fond of home. "M. W. J." has no objection to manage a business.

ROSINA S., nineteen, medium height, dark complexion, brown hair and eyes, rather pretty, wishes to marry a young gentleman of fair complexion, rather tall, and handsome.

TOM H., twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., light-brown hair and blue eyes, in a large business. Respondent must be a tradesman's daughter, about eighteen, of a loving disposition, and fond of music.

WATER LILY, twenty-three, 5ft. 7in., very fair, curly hair, loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be loving, and not over twenty-seven; a sailor preferred.

HENRY, twenty-eight, fair complexion, light hair, wishes to marry a young lady who is dark, amiable, fond of home, domesticated, respectably connected, and of fair education.

LOVING TOM, twenty-four, good looking, in a good position, and fond of music; would make a loving husband. Respondent must be about twenty-two, good looking, and fond of music.

ROBERTUCKLE, eighteen, medium height, fair, pretty, domesticated, fond of home and children, and would make a loving wife. Respondent must be about twenty-two, dark, handsome, in a good situation, and affectionate.

PURPLE PANSY, twenty-one, tall, fair, with dark hair, stately, good looking, loving, domesticated and fond of home, wishes to marry a gentlemanly young man, who is tall, steady, and not under twenty-five; one holding a government situation preferred.

HELEN FRANCES, seventeen, medium height, golden-brown hair, blue eyes, considered pretty, good tempered, lively, domesticated, fond of music, and very affectionate, wishes to marry a tall, dark gentleman, fond of home and children; a clerk preferred.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

GEORGE S. is responded to by—"Lady Clara," nineteen, 5ft. 1 1/2 in., light hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, very fond of children, and is truly loving.

JOSEPH by—"N. J. S.," twenty-three, a domestic servant who thinks she would suit him.

CAROLINE by—"Flying Breeze," twenty-two, 5ft. 5in., blue eyes, and fair complexion.

EMMA F. by—"W. J.," who is tall, considered good looking, and would make a loving husband.

BILL S. by—"EMMA B.," twenty, tall, dark, domesticated, of a loving disposition, and fresh colour.

W. A. C. by—"Olive," handsome, very tall, dark, a governess in a gentleman's family, and has expectations of money.

SWEET WILLIAM by—"May," twenty-five, tall, dark, very good looking, domesticated, accomplished, and a good pianiste, but has no money.

M. S. by—"W. S. M.," a widower, forty-two; he is loving, faithful, fond of home, good looking, and most respectable. She will find him a true friend.

H. W. by—"E. H.," twenty-three, tall, fair, and used to business; has no objection to twelve months' courtship.

AN ENGINEER by—"L. P.," twenty-three, brown hair, light eyes, slender, domesticated, and fond of children.

HELENA by—"Harry," twenty-four, 5ft. 7in., rather fair, whiskers and moustache, loving, and good looking.

MAGGIE MAY by—"George J.," 5ft. 3in., hazel eyes, dark-brown hair, in a fair way of business for himself. "George J." thinks he is just the very man to suit "Maggie."

JACK WHEEL ROPE by—"Alice," twenty, brown eyes and hair, pretty, loving, amiable, would make a good, true little wife. "Alice" is respectably connected, has received a fair education, is longing for a nice manly fellow to love her, and thinks she would suit "Jack Wheel Rope."

LALLA ROOKE would like to hear something more of "Houdelap," as she thinks he will suit her.

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